On the Utility and Liability of History for Life

"Moreover, I hate everything that only instructs me without increasing or immediately stimulating my own activity." These words of Goethe's, a boldly expressed *ceterum censeo*, provide an appropriate beginning for our observations on the worth and worthlessness of history. My purpose here is to demonstrate why instruction without stimulation, why knowledge that inhibits activity, why history as a costly intellectual superfluity and luxury must, in accordance with Goethe's words, arouse our intense hatred—for the simple reason that we still lack the most basic necessities, and because the superfluous is the enemy of necessity. To be sure, we need history; but our need for it is different from that of the pampered idler in the garden of knowledge—regardless of the noble condescension with which he might look upon our crude and inelegant needs and afflictions. That is, we need it for life and for action, not for the easy withdrawal from life and from action, let alone for whitewashing a selfish life and cowardly, base actions. We only wish to serve history to the extent that it serves life, but there is a way of practicing history and a valorization of history in which life atrophies and degenerates: a phenomenon that it will likely be as painful as it is necessary to diagnose in the striking symptoms of our present age.

I have sought to depict a feeling that has often tormented me; I am taking my revenge on it by exposing it to public scrutiny. Perhaps this depiction will cause someone or other to

declare that he is also familiar with this feeling, but that I have not experienced it in all its purity and originarity, and that I hence have failed to express it with the confidence and maturity of experience that it requires. A few people may, perhaps, make this assertion, but most will say that it is a wholly perverse, unnatural, repulsive, and downright illicit feeling; indeed, they will say that by feeling it, I have proven myself unworthy of that powerful historical orientation of our age, which, as is well known, has made itself evident for two generations now, particularly among the Germans. However, the very fact that I dare to go public with the natural description of my feeling will tend to promote rather than injure general propriety, since I will thereby give many the opportunity to say flattering things about the aforementioned orientation of our age. But I stand to gain something for myself that is worth even more than propriety—to be publicly instructed and set right about our age.

The observations offered here are also unfashionable because I attempt to understand something in which our age justifiably takes pride—namely, its historical cultivation—as a detriment, an infirmity, a deficiency of the age, and furthermore, because I am even of the opinion that all of us suffer from a debilitating historical fever and that we at the very least need to recognize that we suffer from it. But if Goethe was correct in saying that when we cultivate our virtues we simultaneously cultivate our faults, and if, as everyone knows, a hypertrophied virtue—and the historical sensibility of our time seems to me to be just such a hypertrophied virtue—can cause the demise of a people just as easily as a hypertrophied vice, then perhaps just this once I will be permitted to speak up. By way of exculpation, I should not conceal the fact, first, that I have mainly drawn the occurrences that aroused in me those tormenting feelings from my own experiences and that I have drawn on the experiences of others only by way of comparison, and second, that it is only to the extent that I am a student of more ancient times—above all, of ancient Greece—that I, as a child of our time, have had such unfashionable experiences. But I have to concede this

much to myself as someone who by occupation is a classical philologist, for I have no idea what the significance of classical philology would be in our age, if not to have an unfashionable effect—that is, to work against the time and thereby have an effect upon it, hopefully for the benefit of a future time.

1

Observe the herd as it grazes past you: it cannot distinguish yesterday from today, leaps about, eats, sleeps, digests, leaps some more, and carries on like this from morning to night and from day to day, tethered by the short leash of its pleasures and displeasures to the stake of the moment, and thus it is neither melancholy nor bored. It is hard on the human being to observe this, because he boasts about the superiority of his humanity over animals and yet looks enviously upon their happiness—for the one and only thing that he desires is to live like an animal, neither bored nor in pain, and yet he desires this in vain, because he does not desire it in the same way as does the animal. The human being might ask the animal: "Why do you just look at me like that instead of telling me about your happiness?" The animal wanted to answer, "Because I always immediately forget what I wanted to say"—but it had already forgotten this answer and hence said nothing, so that the human being was left to wonder.

But he also wondered about himself and how he was unable to learn to forget and always clung to what was past; no matter how far or how fast he runs, that chain runs with him. It is cause for wonder: the moment, here in a flash, gone in a flash, before it nothing, after it nothing, does, after all, return as a ghost once more and disturbs the peace of a later moment. Over and over a leaf is loosened from the scroll of time, falls out, flutters away—and suddenly flutters back into the human being's lap. Then the human being says "I remember," and he envies the animal that immediately forgets and that sees how every moment actually dies, sinks back into fog and night, and is extinguished forever. Thus the animal lives

ahistorically, for it disappears entirely into the present, like a number that leaves no remainder; it does not know how to dissemble, conceals nothing, and appears in each and every moment as exactly what it is, and so cannot help but be honest. The human being, by contrast, braces himself against the great and ever-greater burden of the past; it weighs him down or bends him over, hampers his gait as an invisible and obscure load that he can pretend to disown, and that he is only too happy to disown when he is among his fellow human beings in order to arouse their envy. That is why the sight of a grazing herd or, even closer to home, of a child, which, not yet having a past to disown, plays in blissful blindness between the fences of the past and the future, moves him as though it were the vision of a lost paradise. And yet the child's play must be disturbed; all too soon it will be summoned out of its obliviousness. Then it will come to understand the phrase "it was," that watchword that brings the human being strife, suffering, and boredom, so that he is reminded what his existence basically is—a never to be perfected imperfect. When death finally brings him the much longed for oblivion, it simultaneously also suppresses the present; and with this, existence places its seal on the knowledge that existence itself is nothing but an uninterrupted having-been, something that lives by negating, consuming, and contradicting itself.

If happiness, if striving for new happiness, is in any conceivable sense what binds the living to life and urges them to live on, then perhaps no philosopher is closer to the truth than the cynic, for the happiness of the animal, who is, after all, the consummate cynic, provides living proof of the truth of cynicism. The smallest happiness, if it is uninterruptedly present and makes one happy, is an incomparably greater form of happiness than the greatest happiness that occurs as a mere episode, as a mood, so to speak, as a wild whim, in the midst of sheer joylessness, yearning, and privation. But in the case of the smallest and the greatest happiness, it is always just one thing alone that makes happiness happiness: the ability to for-

get, or, expressed in a more scholarly fashion, the capacity to feel ahistorically over the entire course of its duration. Anyone who cannot forget the past entirely and set himself down on the threshold of the moment, anyone who cannot stand, without dizziness or fear, on one single point like a victory goddess, will never know what happiness is; worse, he will never do anything that makes others happy. Imagine the most extreme example, a human being who does not possess the power to forget, who is damned to see becoming everywhere; such a human being would no longer believe in his own being, would no longer believe in himself, would see everything flow apart in turbulent particles, and would lose himself in this stream of becoming; like the true student of Heraclitus, in the end he would hardly even dare to lift a finger. All action requires forgetting, just as the existence of all organic things requires not only light, but darkness as well. A human being who wanted to experience things in a thoroughly historical manner would be like someone forced to go without sleep, or like an animal supposed to exist solely by rumination and ever repeated rumination. In other words, it is possible to live almost without memory, indeed, to live happily, as the animals show us; but without forgetting, it is utterly impossible to live at all. Or, to express my theme even more simply: *There is a degree of sleeplessness, of rumination, of historical sensibility, that injures and ultimately destroys all living things, whether a human being, a people, or a culture.*

In order to determine this degree and thereby establish the limit beyond which the past must be forgotten if it is not to become the grave digger of the present, we would have to know exactly how great the *shaping power* of a human being, a people, a culture is; by shaping power I mean that power to develop its own singular character out of itself, to shape and assimilate what is past and alien, to heal wounds, to replace what has been lost, to recreate broken forms out of itself alone. There are people who possess so little of this power that they bleed to death from a single experience, a single pain, particularly even from a single mild injustice, as from a tiny little cut. On

the other hand, there are those who are so little affected by life's most savage and devastating disasters, and even by their own malicious actions, that, while these are still taking place, or at least shortly thereafter, they manage to arrive at a tolerable level of well-being and a kind of clear conscience. The stronger the roots of a human being's innermost nature, the more of the past he will assimilate or forcibly appropriate; and the most powerful, most mighty nature would be characterized by the fact that there would be no limit at which its historical sensibility would have a stifling and harmful effect; it would appropriate and incorporate into itself all that is past, what is its own as well as what is alien, transforming it, as it were, into its own blood. Such a nature knows how to forget whatever does not subdue it; these things no longer exist. Its horizon is closed and complete, and nothing is capable of reminding it that beyond this horizon there are human beings, passions, doctrines, goals. And this is a universal law: every living thing can become healthy, strong, and fruitful only within a defined horizon; if it is incapable of drawing a horizon around itself and too selfish, in turn, to enclose its own perspective within an alien horizon, then it will feebly waste away or hasten to its timely end. Cheerfulness, good conscience, joyous deeds, faith in what is to come—all this depends, both in the instance of the individual as well as in that of a people, on whether there is a line that segregates what is discernible and bright from what is unilluminable and obscure; on whether one knows how to forget things at the proper time just as well as one knows how to remember at the proper time; on whether one senses with a powerful instinct which occasions should be experienced historically, and which ahistorically. This is the proposition the reader is invited to consider: *the ahistorical and the historical are equally necessary for the health of an individual, a people, and a culture.*

Everyone has made at least this one simple observation: a human being's historical knowledge and sensitivity can be very limited, his horizon as narrow as that of the inhabitant of an isolated alpine valley; each of his judgments may contain an

injustice, each experience may be marked by the misconception that he is the first to experience it—yet in spite of all these injustices and all these misconceptions, he stands there, vigorously healthy and robust, a joy to look at. At the same time, someone standing close beside him who is far more just and learned grows sick and collapses because the lines of his horizon are restlessly redrawn again and again, because he cannot extricate himself from the much more fragile web of his justice and his truths and find his way back to crude wanting and desiring. By contrast, we saw the animal, which is wholly ahistorical and dwells within a horizon almost no larger than a mere point, yet still lives in a certain kind of happiness, at the very least without boredom and dissimulation. We will therefore have to consider the capacity to live to a certain degree ahistorically to be more significant and more originary, insofar as it lays the foundation upon which something just, healthy, and great, something that is truly human, is able to grow at all. The ahistorical is like an enveloping atmosphere in which alone life is engendered, and it disappears again with the destruction of this atmosphere. It is true: only when the human being, by thinking, reflecting, comparing, analyzing, and synthesizing, limits that ahistorical element, only when a bright, flashing, iridescent light is generated within that enveloping cloud of mist—that is, only by means of the power to utilize the past for life and to reshape past events into history once more—does the human being become a human being; but in an excess of history the human being ceases once again, and without that mantle of the ahistorical he would never have begun and would never have dared to begin. What deeds could a human being possibly accomplish without first entering that misty region of the ahistorical? Or, to put metaphors aside and turn instead to an illustrative example: imagine a man seized and carried away by a vehement passion for a woman or for a great idea; how his world changes! Looking backward he feels he is blind, listening around him he hears what is unfamiliar as a dull, insignificant sound; and those things that he perceives at all he never before

perceived in this way; so palpably near, colorful, resonant, illuminated, as though he were apprehending it with all his senses at once. All his valuations are changed and devalued; many things he can no longer value because he can scarcely feel them any more; he asks himself whether all this time he was merely duped by the words and opinions of others; he marvels that his memory turns inexhaustibly round and round in a circle and yet is still too weak and exhausted to make one single leap out of this circle. It is the most unjust condition in the world, narrow, ungrateful to the past, blind to dangers, deaf to warnings; a tiny whirlpool of life in a dead sea of night and oblivion; and yet this condition—ahistorical, antihistorical through and through—is not only the womb of the unjust deed, but of every just deed as well; and no artist will create a picture, no general win a victory, and no people gain its freedom without their having previously desired and striven to accomplish these deeds in just such an ahistorical condition. Just as anyone who acts, in Goethe's words, is always without conscience, so is he also without knowledge: he forgets most things in order to do one thing, he is unjust to whatever lies behind him and recognizes only one right, the right of what is to be. Thus, everyone who acts loves his action infinitely more than it deserves to be loved, and the best deeds occur in such an exuberance of love that, no matter what, they must be unworthy of this love, even if their worth were otherwise incalculably great.

If in many cases any one person were capable of sniffing out and breathing once again this ahistorical atmosphere in which every great historical event is born, then such a person, as a cognitive being, would be able to elevate himself to a *suprahistorical* standpoint, something Niebuhr once depicted as the possible result of historical reflections. "History," he says, "when understood clearly and fully, is at least useful for one thing: so that we might recognize how even the greatest and loftiest intellects of the human race do not know how fortuitously their eye has taken on its manner of seeing and forcibly demanded that all others see in this same manner; forcibly, be-

cause the intensity of their consciousness is exceptionally great. Anyone who has not recognized and understood this fully and in many individual instances will be enslaved by the presence of any powerful intellect that places the loftiest passion into a given form." Such a standpoint could be called suprahistorical because anyone who occupies it could no longer be seduced into continuing to living on and taking part in history, since he would have recognized the single condition of all events: that blindness and injustice dwelling in the soul of those who act. From that point onward he would be cured of taking history overly seriously. For he would have learned, for every human being, for every experience—regardless of whether it occurred among the Greeks or the Turks, or in the first or the nineteenth century—to answer the question: Why and to what purpose do people live? Anyone who asks his acquaintances whether they would like to relive the last ten or twenty years will easily recognize which of them are suited for that suprahistorical standpoint. To be sure, they will all answer "No!," but they will give different reasons for this answer. Some, perhaps, by consoling themselves with the claim "but the next twenty will be better." Of such people David Hume once said derisively:

> And from the dregs of life hope to receive,
> What the first sprightly running could not give.

We shall call them historical human beings; a glance into the past drives them on toward the future, inflames their courage to go on living, kindles their hope that justice will come, that happiness is waiting just the other side of the mountain they are approaching. These historical human beings believe that the meaning of existence will come ever more to light in the course of a *process*; they look backward only to understand the present by observation of the prior process and to learn to desire the future even more keenly; they have no idea how ahistorically they think and act despite all their history, nor that their concern with history stands in the service, not of pure knowledge, but of life.

But that question, whose first answer we have just heard, can also be answered differently. Of course, once again with a "No!," but for different reasons: with the No of the suprahistorical human being, who does not seek salvation in a process, but for whom instead the world is complete and has arrived at its culmination in every individual moment. What could ten new years possibly teach that the past ten could not!

Suprahistorical human beings have never agreed whether the substance of this doctrine is happiness or resignation, virtue or atonement; but, contrary to all historical modes of viewing the past, they do arrive at unanimity with regard to the statement: the past and the present are one and the same. That is, in all their diversity, they are identical in type, and as the omnipresence of imperishable types they make up a stationary formation of unalterable worth and eternally identical meaning. Just as the hundreds of different languages conform to the same constant types of human needs, so that anyone who understood these needs would be able to learn nothing new from these languages, the suprahistorical thinker illuminates the entire history of peoples and individuals from the inside, clairvoyantly divining the primordial meaning of the different hieroglyphs and gradually even exhaustedly evading this constantly rising flood of written signs: for, given the infinite superabundance of events, how could he possibly avoid being satiated, oversatiated, indeed, even nauseated! Ultimately, perhaps the rashest of these suprahistorical human beings will be prepared to say to his heart, as did Giacomo Leopardi:

> Nothing exists that is worthy
> of your emotions, and the earth deserves no sighs.
> Our being is pain and boredom, and the world
> is excrement—nothing else.
> Calm yourself.

But let us leave the suprahistorical human beings to their nausea and their wisdom: today we instead want to rejoice with all our hearts in our unwisdom and to make things easier for

ourselves by playing the roles of those active and progressive people who venerate process. Our evaluation of what is historical might prove to be nothing more than an occidental prejudice, but let us at least move forward and not simply stand still in these prejudices! If we could at least learn how to pursue history better for the purpose of *life*! Then we would gladly concede that suprahistorical human beings possess more wisdom than we do; at least, as long as we are certain of possessing more life, for then, at least, our unwisdom would have more of a future than their wisdom. And so as to banish all doubts about the meaning of this antithesis between life and wisdom, I will come to my own aid by employing a long-standing practice and propound, without further ado, some theses.

A historical phenomenon, when purely and completely understood and reduced to an intellectual phenomenon, is dead for anyone who understands it, for in it he understands the delusion, the injustice, the blind passion, and in general the whole darkened earthly horizon of that phenomenon, and from this simultaneously its historical power. At this point this power becomes powerless for him as someone who understands it, but perhaps it is not yet powerless for him as someone who lives.

History, conceived as a pure science and accorded sovereignty, would be for humanity a kind of conclusion to life and a settling of accounts. But historical cultivation is beneficial and holds out promise for the future only when it follows in the wake of a powerful new torrent of life, for example, an evolving culture; that is, only when it is governed and guided by a superior power, instead of governing and guiding itself.

Insofar as it stands in the service of life, history also stands in the service of an ahistorical power, and because of this subordinate position, it neither could nor should become a pure science on the order of mathematics, for example. But the question about the degree to which life needs the service of history at all is one of the supreme questions and worries that impinges on the health of a human being, a people, or a culture. For at

the point of a certain excess of history, life crumbles and degenerates—as does, ultimately, as a result of this degeneration, history itself, as well.

2

That life requires the service of history must be comprehended, however, just as clearly as the proposition that will subsequently be proved—that an excess of history is harmful to life. History pertains to the living person in three respects: it pertains to him as one who acts and strives, as one who preserves and venerates, and as one who suffers and is in need of liberation. These three relations correspond to three kinds of history: insofar as it is permissible to distinguish between a *monumental*, an *antiquarian*, and a *critical* kind of history.

Above all, history pertains to the active and powerful human being, to the person who is involved in a great struggle and who needs exemplars, teachers, and comforters, but is unable to find them among his contemporaries and in the present age. This is how it pertained to Schiller, for, as Goethe observed, our age is so wretched that the poet encounters no useful qualities in the lives of the human beings around him. Polybius, for example, was thinking of the person who takes action when he called political history the proper preparation for governing a state and the best teacher, who admonishes us steadfastly to endure the vicissitudes of fortune by reminding us of the misfortunes of others. Anyone who has come to recognize in this the meaning of history cannot help but be annoyed to see curious tourists or meticulous micrologists climbing about on the pyramids of great past ages; where he finds inspiration to emulate and to improve, he does not wish to encounter the idler who, longing for diversion or excitement, saunters about as though among the painted treasures in a gallery. So as not to experience despair and disgust amid these weak and hopeless idlers, amid these excited and fidgety contemporaries, who in fact only appear to be active, the person who takes action must, in order to catch his breath, glance backward and interrupt the

progress toward his goal. However, his goal is some kind of happiness—not necessarily his own, but often that of a people or of all of humanity; he shrinks from resignation and uses history as a means to combat it. For the most part, he can hope for no reward other than fame, that is, the expectation of a place of honor in the temple of history, where he can, in turn, serve later generations as a teacher, comforter, and admonisher. For his commandment reads: Whatever was once capable of extending the concept of "the human being" and of giving it a more beautiful substance must be eternally present in order for it perpetually to have this effect. That the great moments in the struggles of individuals form links in one single chain; that they combine to form a mountain range of humankind through the millennia; that for me the highest point of such a long-since-past moment is still alive, bright, and great—this is the fundamental thought in the belief in humanity that expresses itself in the demand for a *monumental* history. Precisely this demand that what is great be eternal sparks the most terrible struggle, however. For every other living thing cries out: "No! The monumental shall not come into being"—this is the watchword of those who oppose it. Dull habit, the trivial and the common, fill every nook and cranny of the world, gather like a dense earthly fog around everything great, throw themselves in the path that greatness must travel to attain immortality so as to obstruct, deceive, smother, and suffocate it. But this path leads through human minds! Through the minds of frightened and short-lived animals who constantly return to the same needs and only with great effort ward off destruction for a short time. For first and foremost they want only one thing: to live at all costs. Who could possibly imagine that they would run the difficult relay race of monumental history that greatness alone can survive! And yet again and again a few awaken who, viewing past greatness and strengthened by their observation of it, feel a sense of rapture, as if human life were a magnificent thing and as if the most beautiful fruit of this bitter plant were the knowledge that in an earlier time some person once

passed through this existence with pride and strength, another pensively, a third helpfully and with compassion—all of them leaving behind the single lesson that the most beautiful life is led by those who do not hold existence in high regard. While the common human being clutches to this span of time with such greed and gloomy earnest, those who were on the way to immortality and to monumental history at least knew how to treat it with Olympian laughter, or at least with sublime derision; often they went to their graves with a sense of irony—for what was left of them to bury! Certainly only that which as waste, refuse, vanity, and animality had always oppressed them, something that now would fall into oblivion after long being the object of their contempt. But one thing will live on: the signature of their most authentic being, a work, a deed, a rare inspiration, a creation; it will live on because posterity cannot do without it. In this, its most transfigured form, fame is something more than just the tastiest morsel of our self-love, as Schopenhauer called it; it is the belief in the coherence and continuity of what is great in all ages, it is a protest against the change of generations and against transitoriness.

Of what utility to the contemporary human being, then, is the monumental view of the past, the occupation with the classical and rare accomplishments of earlier times? From it he concludes that the greatness that once existed was at least *possible* at one time, and that it therefore will probably be possible once again; he goes his way with more courage, for the doubt that befalls him in his weaker moments—Is he not, in fact, striving for the impossible?—is now banished. Suppose someone believed that no more than one hundred productive human beings, educated and working in the same spirit, would be needed to put an end to the cultivatedness that has just now become fashionable in Germany; would he not be strengthened by the recognition that the culture of the Renaissance was borne on the shoulders of just such a band of one hundred men?

And yet—so that we might immediately learn something

new from the same example—how fluid and tentative, how imprecise that comparison would be! If it is to be effective, how many differences must be overlooked, with what violence the individuality of what is past must be forced into a general form, its sharp edges and its lines broken in favor of this conformity. Basically, in fact, what was possible once could only become possible a second time if the Pythagoreans were correct in believing that when an identical constellation of the heavenly bodies occurs, identical events—down to individual, minute details—must repeat themselves on the earth as well; so that whenever the stars have a particular relation to each other, a Stoic will join forces with an Epicurean to murder Caesar, and whenever they are in another configuration Columbus will discover America. Only if the earth always began its drama all over again after the conclusion of the fifth act, only if it were certain that the same entanglement of motives, the same *deus ex machina*, the same catastrophe would recur at fixed intervals, could the powerful human being possibly desire monumental history in its absolute iconic *veracity*, that is, with every fact depicted in all its peculiarity and uniqueness. This is unlikely to happen until astronomers have once again become astrologers. Until then, monumental history will have no need for that absolute veracity: it will continue to approach, generalize, and ultimately identify nonidentical things, it will continue to diminish the differences between motives and causes in order to present, to the detriment of the *causae*, the *effectus* as monumental—that is, as exemplary and worthy of emulation. As a result, since it disregards all causes, one would with little exaggeration be able to call monumental history a collection of "effects in themselves," of events that will have an effect on every age. What is celebrated at popular festivals and at religious or military commemorations is really just such an "effect in itself": this is what disturbs the sleep of the ambitious, what lies like an amulet on the heart of the enterprising—not the true historical *connexus* of causes and effects, which, once fully comprehended, would only prove that the dice game of the

future and of chance would never again produce something wholly identical to what it produced in the past.

As long as the soul of historiography lies in the great *stimuli* that a powerful person derives from it; as long as the past must be described as worthy of imitation, as capable of imitation and as possible a second time; it is in danger of becoming somewhat distorted, of being reinterpreted more favorably, and hence of approaching pure fiction. Yes, there are ages that are entirely incapable of distinguishing between a monumental past and a mythical fiction, because they could derive the very same stimuli from the one as from the other. Thus, if the monumental view of the past *prevails* over other modes of viewing it, over the antiquarian and the critical views, then the past itself is *damaged*: entire large parts of it are forgotten, scorned, and washed away as if by a gray, unremitting tide, and only a few individual, embellished facts rise as islands above it. There seems to be something unnatural and wondrous about those rare persons who become visible at all, much like the golden hip by which the disciples of Pythagoras claimed to recognize their master. Monumental history deceives by means of analogies: with seductive similarities it arouses rashness in those who are courageous and fanaticism in those who are inspired; and if one imagines this history in the hands and heads of talented egoists and wicked fanatics, then empires will be destroyed, princes murdered, wars and revolutions incited, and the number of historical "effects in themselves"—that is, of effects without sufficient causes—further increase. So much as a reminder of the damage that monumental history can cause among powerful and active human beings, regardless of whether they are good or evil: just imagine the effect it would have if it were seized and exploited by the powerless and inactive!

Let's take the simplest and most common example. Just picture to yourself the unartistic and insufficiently artistic natures clad and armored in the monumental history of art: against whom will they now turn their weapons! Against their archenemies, the strong artistic spirits; in other words, against those

who alone are capable of truly learning—that is, learning with an eye to life—from history and of translating what they have learned into a higher form of praxis. Their path is obstructed; their air is darkened when zealous idolators dance around the shrine at some half-understood monument of a great past, as if they wanted to say: "Look, this is the only true and real art; of what concern to you is art that is just coming into being or has not yet been realized!" Apparently this dancing mob even has the privilege of determining what "good taste" is, for anyone who himself actually creates has always been at a disadvantage to those who merely observe and do not themselves take a hand in creation; just as in all ages the bar-stool politician is more intelligent, just, and reflective than the governing statesman. But if one insists on transposing the custom of popular referendum and majority rule into the realm of art and thereby forcing, as it were, the artist to defend himself before a jury of aesthetic do-nothings, then you can bet that he will be condemned; and this not despite the fact that, but precisely *because*, his judges have ceremoniously proclaimed the canon of monumental art—that is, according to our earlier explanation, of the art that in all ages "produced an effect": whereas for the appreciation of all art that is nonmonumental simply because it is contemporary, these judges lack, first, the need, second, the genuine inclination, and third, precisely that authority of history. On the other hand, their instinct tells them that art can be murdered by art: the monumental should by no means come into being again, and to prevent this they deploy the authority of the monumental derived from the past. Thus they are connoisseurs of art because they want to do away with art altogether; thus they masquerade as physicians, while in fact they intend to administer a poison; thus they cultivate their tongue and their taste in order to explain from their position of fastidiousness why they so persistently reject all the nourishing artistic dishes offered them. For they don't want great art to come into being: their strategy is to say: "Look, great art already exists!" In truth, however, they are as little con-

cerned with this great art that already exists as they are with that art that is coming into being; their lives bear witness to this. Monumental history is the costume under which their hatred of all the great and powerful people of their age masquerades as satiated admiration for the great and powerful people of past ages, the costume in which they surreptitiously turn the actual meaning of the monumental view of history into its opposite; whether they are clearly aware of it or not, they act as though their motto were "Let the dead bury the living."

Each of these three types of history is valid only in one soil and in one climate; in any other it develops into the most devastating weed. If the human being who wants to create something great needs the past at all, then he takes control of it by means of monumental history; those, on the other hand, who wish to remain within the realm of the habitual and the time-honored, foster the past in the manner of antiquarian historians; and only those who are oppressed by the affliction of the present and who wish to throw off this burden at all costs sense the need for critical history—that is, for history that judges and condemns. Much harm stems from the thoughtless transplanting of these plants: the critic without affliction, the antiquarian without piety, the connoisseur of greatness unable to create something great are just such plants that, alienated from the natural soil that nurtures them, have degenerated and shot up as weeds.

3

Second, history pertains to the person who preserves and venerates, to him who looks back with loyalty and love on the origins through which he became what he is; by means of this piety he gives thanks, as it were, for his existence. By attending with caring hands to what has subsisted since ancient times, he seeks to preserve for those who will emerge after him the conditions under which he himself has come into being—and by doing so he serves life. For such a soul the possession of ancestral household effects takes on a different meaning, for far

from the soul possessing these objects, it is possessed by them. Small, limited, decaying, antiquated things obtain their own dignity and sanctity when the preserving and venerating soul of the antiquarian human being takes up residence in them and makes itself a comfortable nest. The history of his city becomes his own history; he understands its wall, its towered gate, its ordinances, and its popular festivals as an illustrated diary of his youth, and he rediscovers himself in all of this, his strength, his diligence, his joy, his judgments, his foolishness, and his ill manners. "It was possible to live here," he says to himself, "because it is possible to live here and will in the future be possible to live here, for we are tough and cannot be broken overnight." With this "we" he looks beyond his own transient, curious, individual existence and senses himself to be the spirit of his house, his lineage, and his city. At times he even greets across the distance of darkening and confusing centuries the soul of his people as his own soul; the ability to empathize with things and divine their greater significance, to detect traces that are almost extinguished, to instinctively read correctly a past frequently overwritten, to quickly understand the palimpsests, indeed, polypsests—these are his gifts and his virtues. It was with these that Goethe stood before Erwin von Steinach's monumental work; the historical veil of clouds that separated them was torn apart in the storm of his emotions: he recognized this German work for the first time, "exerting its effect out of a strong and rugged German soul." It was just such a sensibility and impulse that guided the Italians of the Renaissance and reawakened in their poets the ancient Italian genius to "a marvelous new resounding of the lyre," as Jacob Burckhardt has expressed it. But that antiquarian sense of veneration has its greatest worth when it infuses the modest, rough, even wretched conditions in which a human being or a people live with a simple and stirring sense of joy and satisfaction. Just as Niebuhr, for example, admits with honest frankness that he lived contentedly, without missing art, in moor and meadow among free peasants who had a history. How could history

serve life better than by binding even less-favored generations and populations to their native land and native customs, helping them settle in, and preventing them from straying into foreign lands in search of better things for whose possession they then compete in battle? At times what ties individuals, as it were, to these companions and surroundings, to these tiresome habits, to these barren mountain ridges, seems to be obstinacy and imprudence—but it is an imprudence of the healthiest sort, one that benefits the totality. Anyone is aware of this who has ever come to understand the dreadful consequences of the adventurous joy of migration, especially when it takes hold of an entire population, or who has studied up close the conditions of a people that has forfeited loyalty to its own past and has succumbed to restless, cosmopolitan craving for new and ever newer things. The opposite sensation, the contentment the tree feels with its roots, the happiness of knowing that one's existence is not formed arbitrarily and by chance, but that instead it grows as the blossom and the fruit of a past that is its inheritance and that thereby excuses, indeed, justifies its existence—this is what today we are in the habit of calling the true historical sensibility.

Now, to be sure, this is not the condition in which the human being would be most capable of reducing the past to pure knowledge; so that even here we also perceive, as we already perceived in the case of monumental history, that the past itself suffers as long as history serves life and is governed by the impulses of life. To take some freedoms with our metaphor: the tree feels its roots more than it sees them; however, this feeling estimates their size in analogy to the size and strength of the visible limbs. Even if the tree is wrong about this: how wrong must it then be about the surrounding forest, about which it knows and feels anything only to the extent that it hinders or promotes its own growth—but nothing else! The antiquarian sensibility of a human being, of a civic community, of an entire people always has an extremely limited field of vision; most things it does not perceive at all, and the few things it does

see, it views too closely and in isolation; it is unable to gauge anything, and as a result it regards everything to be equally important, and consequently the individual thing to be too important. There is no criterion for value and no sense of proportion for the things of the past that would truly do them justice when viewed in relation to each other; instead, their measure and proportions are always taken only in relation to the antiquarian individual or people that looks back on them.

This always brings with it one immediate danger: ultimately, anything ancient and past that enters into this field of vision is simply regarded as venerable, and everything that fails to welcome the ancient with reverence—in other words, whatever is new and in the process of becoming—is met with hostility and rejected. Thus, in the plastic and graphic arts even the Greeks tolerated the hieratic style alongside the free and great style; indeed, later they not only tolerated pointed noses and frosty smiles, but even turned them into a sign of refined taste. When a people's sensibility hardens in this way; when history serves past life to the extent that it not only undermines further life but especially higher life; when the historical sense no longer conserves but rather mummifies it, then beginning at its crown and moving down to its roots, the tree gradually dies an unnatural death—and eventually the roots themselves commonly perish. Antiquarian history degenerates from the moment when the fresh life of the present no longer animates and inspires it. At this point, piety withers, the scholarly habit persists without it and revolves with self-satisfied egotism around its own axis. Then we view the repugnant spectacle of a blind mania to collect, of a restless gathering together of everything that once existed. The human being envelops himself in the smell of mustiness; by this antiquarian behavior he even succeeds in reducing a more significant impulse, a nobler need, to this insatiable curiosity—or more accurately, to an all-encompassing desire for what is old. Often he sinks so low that in the end he is satisfied with any fare and even devours with gusto the dust of bibliographical minutiae.

But even if that degeneration does not occur, if antiquarian history does not lose that foundation in which alone it can take root if it is to serve the well-being of life: there are still enough dangers that remain, should it become too powerful and stifle the other modes for viewing history. For antiquarian history understands only how to *preserve* life, not how to create it; therefore, it always underestimates those things that are in the process of becoming because it has no divining instinct—as, for example, monumental history has. Thus, antiquarian history impedes the powerful resolve for the new, it lames the person of action, who, as person of action, must always offend certain acts of piety. The fact that something has grown old gives rise to the demand that it be immortal; for if we add up all the experiences such an antiquity—an old custom, a religious belief, an inherited political privilege—has accumulated over the course of its existence, calculating the entire sum of piety and veneration that individuals and generations have felt toward it, then it seems presumptuous or even impious to replace such an antiquity with a novelty and to oppose such a numerical accumulation of acts of piety and veneration with the single digit of something that is still in the process of becoming and is contemporary.

With this it becomes clear just how badly the human being often needs, in addition to the monumental and antiquarian modes of viewing the past, a *third* mode, the *critical*; and this once again in the service of life. In order to live, he must possess, and from time to time employ, the strength to shatter and dissolve a past; he accomplishes this by bringing this past before a tribunal, painstakingly interrogating it, and finally condemning it. But every past is worthy of being condemned—for this is simply how it is with human affairs: human violence and weakness have always played a powerful role in them. It is not justice that sits in judgment here; even less so is it mercy that passes judgment: rather, it is life and life alone, that dark, driving, insatiable power that lusts after itself. Its verdict is always merciless, always unjust, because it has never flowed from the

pure fountain of knowledge; but in most instances the verdict would be the same, even if spoken by justice itself. "For everything that comes into being is *worthy* of perishing. Thus it would be better if nothing came into being." It takes great strength to be able to live and forget the extent to which living and being unjust are one and the same thing. Even Luther once expressed the opinion that the world came into being only due to an act of forgetfulness on God's part: for if God had thought of "heavy artillery," he would never have created the world. But at times this very life that requires forgetfulness demands the temporary suspension of this forgetfulness; this is when it is supposed to become absolutely clear precisely how unjust the existence of certain things—for example, a privilege, a caste, or a dynasty—really is, and how much these things deserve to be destroyed. This is when its past is viewed critically, when we take a knife to its roots, when we cruelly trample on all forms of piety. It is always a dangerous process, one that is, in fact, dangerous for life itself; and human beings or ages that serve life by passing judgment on and destroying a past are always dangerous and endangered human beings and ages. For since we are, after all, the products of earlier generations, we are also the products of their aberrations, passions, and errors—indeed, of their crimes; it is impossible to free ourselves completely from this chain. If we condemn these aberrations and regard ourselves as free of them, this does not alter the fact that we are descended from them. At best we arrive at an antagonism between our inherited, ancestral nature and our knowledge, or perhaps even at the struggle of a new, stricter discipline against what was long ago inborn and inbred. We cultivate a new habit, a new instinct, a second nature, so that the first nature withers away. This is an attempt to give ourselves *a posteriori*, as it were, a new past from which we would prefer to be descended, as opposed to the past from which we actually descended—this is always dangerous because it is so difficult to set limits on this negating of the past, and because second natures are usually feebler than first natures. Too

frequently we stop at knowing what is good without actually doing it, because we also know what is better without being capable of doing it. But here and there a victory is nonetheless achieved, and for those embroiled in this struggle—for those who make use of critical history in the service of life—there is one noteworthy consolation: the knowledge, namely, that even that first nature was once a second nature, and that every victorious second nature will become a first nature.—

4

These are the services that history is capable of rendering to life; every human being and every people needs, each according to its capacities and needs, a certain knowledge of the past, sometimes as monumental, sometimes as antiquarian, and sometimes as critical history; but not as a horde of pure thinkers who merely observe life, not as knowledge-hungry individuals who can be satisfied by knowledge alone and for whom the increase of knowledge is an end in itself, but always and only for the purpose of life, and hence also always subordinate to the dominance and supreme guidance of this purpose. That this is the natural relation of an age, a culture, or a people to history—called forth by hunger, regulated by the degree of need, kept within bounds by an inherent shaping power; that knowledge of the past is at all times desirable only insofar as it serves the future and the present—not insofar as it weakens the present or uproots a future that is full of life—all of this is simple, just as the truth is simple, and it immediately convinces anyone who does not first insist that historical proof be provided.

And now let's take a quick look at our own time! We are horrified and recoil with a start: what happened to all the clarity, all the naturalness and purity of that relation between life and history? How confused, how exaggerated, how disquieting is this problem that now appears before our eyes! Does the fault lie with us, the viewers? Or has the constellation of life and history really been altered because a powerfully hostile star has come

between them? Let others demonstrate that our perception is incorrect; we intend to express what we think we perceive. Such a star, a brilliant and magnificent star, has indeed come between them, the constellation has, indeed, been altered—*by science, by the demand that history be a science.* Today life no longer rules alone and constrains our knowledge of the past: instead, all the boundary markers have been torn down and everything that once was is now collapsing upon the human being. As far back into the past as the process of becoming extends, as far back as infinity, all perspectives have shifted. No past generation ever witnessed an unsurveyable spectacle of the sort now being staged by the science of universal becoming, by history; but, to be sure, it is staging this spectacle with the dangerous audacity of its motto: *fiat veritas pereat vita.*

Let's paint a picture of the spiritual process that is thereby induced in the soul of the modern human being. Historical knowledge constantly flows into him from inexhaustible sources; alien and disconnected facts crowd in upon him; his memory opens all its gates and is still not open wide enough; nature struggles as best it can to receive, order, and honor these alien guests, but they themselves are involved in a struggle with one another, and it seems necessary to overpower and subdue them all if he himself is not to perish as a result of their struggle. Habituation to such a disorderly, stormy, and struggling household gradually becomes second nature, although there can be no doubt that this second nature is much weaker, much more restless, and in every way more unhealthy than the first. Ultimately, the modern human being drags around with him a huge number of indigestible stones of knowledge, which then on occasion, as in the fairy tale, make quite a racket inside his stomach. This racket betrays the fundamental characteristic of this modern human being: the remarkable antithesis between an interior that corresponds to no exterior and an exterior that corresponds to no interior—an antithesis unknown to the peoples of the ancient world. Knowledge consumed in excess of hunger—indeed, even contrary to one's need—

now no longer is effective as a shaping impulse directed outward, but remains instead hidden in a chaotic inner world that every modern human being, with peculiar pride, designates his own characteristic "inwardness." Of course, he then says that he has the content and only the form is lacking, but for all living things this is a wholly incongruous antithesis. Our modern cultivation is nothing living precisely because it cannot be comprehended without this antithesis: that is, it is no real cultivation, but rather only a kind of knowledge about cultivation; it remains satisfied with the thought and feeling of cultivation, but never arrives at the resolve for achieving cultivation. On the other hand, the true motivation, what becomes externally visible as action, often signifies nothing more than an indifferent convention, a pitiful imitation, or even a crude caricature. In his interior, sentiment then just lies around, much like that snake that swallowed rabbits whole and now lies peacefully in the sun, avoiding all unnecessary movement. The inner process itself now becomes the only matter of real significance: it is the only genuine "cultivation." Every passerby can only hope that such cultivation does not die of indigestion. Imagine, for example, a Greek passing by such cultivation: he would perceive that for modern human beings the terms "cultivated" and "historically cultivated" seem to be so close that they are synonymous and differ only in the number of words. If he were to say "Someone can be highly cultivated and still be historically entirely uncultivated," we would think we had not heard him right and shake our heads in disbelief. That well-known people of the not-so-distant past—I am speaking, of course, of the Greeks—stubbornly preserved an ahistorical sensibility throughout the period of its greatest strength; if a contemporary human being were to be magically transported to that world, he would presumably find the Greeks to be very "uncultivated"; and this, of course, would expose to public ridicule the secret of modern cultivation that is so painstakingly concealed. For we moderns have nothing that we have drawn from ourselves alone; we become something worthy of attention—namely, walking

encyclopaedias, as an ancient Greek transported into our time might perhaps call us—only by stuffing and overstuffing ourselves with alien times, customs, arts, philosophies, religions, and knowledge. However, in the case of an encyclopaedia the only thing of value is what is in it, its content, not its binding or its cover; similarly, all of modern cultivation is basically inward: on its outside the bookbinder has printed on it something to the effect "Handbook of Inward Cultivation for Outward Barbarians." Indeed, this antithesis between inner and outer makes the exterior even more barbaric than would otherwise be the case if a primitive people had evolved only out of itself and its own harsh necessities. For what means does nature still have at its disposal for overcoming those things that overabundantly press upon it? Only the means of accepting it as lightly as possible, in order to dispose of and expel it again quickly. From this develops the habit of no longer taking real things seriously; from this develops the "weak personality," on whom the real, the subsisting, makes only a slight impression. Eventually we become ever more negligent and indolent where outward things are concerned and widen the precarious gulf between content and form to the point of becoming insensitive to barbarism—as long as our memory is repeatedly stimulated anew, as long as new things worthy of knowing, which can be neatly placed in the pigeonholes of that memory, keep streaming in. The culture of a people that is the antithesis of that barbarism was once termed—and in my opinion, rightfully so—the unity of artistic style that manifests itself throughout all the vital self-expressions of a people; this designation should not be misunderstood to imply that it is only a matter of an antithesis between barbarism and *beautiful* style. A people to whom we attribute a culture should in all reality be but a single, vital unity and not fall apart so miserably into inner and outer, content and form. Anyone who wants to aspire to and promote the culture of a people should aspire to and promote this higher unity and work for the destruction of modern cultivatedness in favor of a true cultivation. Such a person should dare to reflect

on how the health of a people undermined by history can be restored, how it can rediscover its instincts and with them its honesty.

I want to speak specifically only about us Germans of the present day, since we suffer more than any other people from that weakness of personality and that contradiction between content and form. We Germans commonly regard form as a convention, as a disguise and deception, and for this reason among us form, if not actually hated, is at any rate not loved. It would be more correct to say that we have an extraordinary fear of convention, both as word and as thing. This fear caused the German to abandon the French school, for he wanted to become more natural and thereby more German. However, he seems to have miscalculated with this "thereby": after running away from the school of convention, he simply let himself follow his own inclinations wherever they led, and then he basically imitated in a sloppy, arbitrary, and half-attentive manner what he had earlier painstakingly imitated with some success. So, compared to earlier times, even today we live in a slovenly, incorrect French convention, as our entire mode of walking, standing, conversing, dressing, and dwelling indicates. By believing that we were retreating to what was natural, we in fact only opted for letting ourselves go, for comfort, and for the smallest possible measure of self-overcoming. Just stroll through any German city—every convention, when compared with the national peculiarities of foreign cities, manifests itself in the negative; everything is colorless, worn out, badly copied, slipshod; everyone does as he likes, but his likes are never powerful and thoughtful, but instead follow those laws prescribed, first, by universal haste, and second, by the universal addiction to comfort. A piece of clothing whose invention does not require any ingenuity and whose design does not cost any time—in other words, something borrowed from a foreign country and carelessly copied—is immediately regarded by the German as a contribution to German national dress. The Germans flatly and ironically reject the sense for form—for they

have a *sense for content*: they are, after all, that people notorious for its inwardness.

There is, however, also a notorious danger associated with this inwardness: the content itself, which one always assumes cannot be seen from the outside at all, may sometimes evaporate. But from the outside we would notice neither its absence nor its prior presence. But even if we imagine the German people to be as far away from this danger as possible, the foreigner's reproach that our inner being is too weak and disorganized to have an outward effect and to take on form will still be largely justified. And yet our inner being can to an uncommon degree prove itself to be finely receptive, serious, powerful, sincere, good, and perhaps even richer than the inner being of other peoples. But as a totality it remains weak because all the beautiful threads are not bound together in a strong knot, so that any visible deed is not the deed of the totality and the self-revelation of this inner being, but rather only a feeble and crude attempt to give one or other of these threads the appearance of being a totality. This is why the German cannot be judged by his actions and why as an individual he remains fully hidden even after taking action. One must gauge him, as is well known, according to his thoughts and feelings, and these he now expresses in his books. If only these very books had not recently aroused more doubts than ever before about whether this notorious inwardness is really still sitting in its inaccessible little temple; it would be horrible to think that someday it might disappear, leaving only that exterior, that arrogantly awkward and humbly slovenly exterior, as the distinguishing mark of the German. It would be almost as horrible if, without our being able to see it, that inwardness were still sitting in this temple, and that it had been disguised, painted, and made up to be an actress, if not something worse. At any rate, this seems to be what Grillparzer, someone who stands to one side and quietly observes, gathers from his experience in the theater. "We feel with abstractions," he says, "we scarcely know any longer how our contemporaries express their feelings; we let them act in

ways in which nowadays feelings would no longer make them act. Shakespeare has spoiled all of us moderns."

This is an individual case, one which I have perhaps been too quick to generalize. But how terrible this generalization, if justified, would be if the individual cases were to come to the attention of the observer all too frequently; how desperate the first sentence of Grillparzer's statement would then sound: we Germans feel with abstractions. We have all been spoiled by history—a statement that would destroy at its roots all hope for a future national culture. For every such hope grows out of faith in the authenticity and immediacy of German feeling, out of faith in our unimpaired inwardness. What can we possibly still hope for, what can we possibly still have faith in once the source of hope and faith has been muddied, once inwardness has learned to take leaps, to dance, to paint its face, to express itself in abstractions and with calculation, and gradually to lose itself! And how is the great, productive spirit supposed to be able to endure living among a people that is no longer certain of its unitary inwardness and that is divided into cultivated persons of ill-cultivated and corrupted inwardness and uncultivated persons of inaccessible inwardness? How is he supposed to endure if the unity of national feeling is lost, if, moreover, he knows that precisely in that part of the population that calls itself cultivated and lays claim to the artistic spirits of the nation this feeling has been counterfeited and covered with makeup. Even if here and there the judgment and taste of some individuals have become more refined and more sublime—that is no compensation for him; it torments him that he is forced to address himself only to a sect, as it were, and that he is no longer needed by his people as a whole. Perhaps he will prefer to bury his treasure because he feels disgust at being pretentiously patronized by a sect while his heart is full of compassion for all. The instinct of his people no longer embraces him; it is useless for him to stretch out his longing arms. What else can he do but turn his inspired hatred against that hindering constraint, against the barriers erected in the so-called cultivation

of his people, so that as judge he can at least condemn what he, a vital and life-giving being, regards as destruction and degradation. So he trades the profound insight into his fate for the divine joy of the creative and helpful person, and he ends his days as a solitary knower, as an oversatiated sage. This is the most painful spectacle: anyone who witnesses it will recognize in it a sacred compulsion. He will say to himself: "Something has to be done here; that higher unity in the nature and soul of a people must be restored, that schism between the inner and the outer must once again disappear under the hammer blows of necessity." But what means should he employ? All that remains for him is his profound knowledge: by expressing it, disseminating it, strewing it in handfuls, he hopes to sow the seeds of a need, and from this strong need someday a strong deed will emerge. And so as to leave no doubt about the source from which I draw my example of this necessity, this need, this knowledge, I hereby explicitly declare that it is *the German unity* in its highest sense to which we aspire, and to which we aspire more strongly than we do to political unification—*the unity of the German spirit and German life after the destruction of the antithesis between form and content, between inwardness and convention.*—

5

It seems to me that the surfeit of history in a given age is inimical and dangerous to life in five respects: such an excess produces the previously discussed contrast between the internal and the external and thereby weakens the personality; this excess leads an age to imagine that it possesses the rarest virtue, justice, to a higher degree than any other age; this excess undermines the instincts of a people and hinders the maturation of the individual no less than that of the totality; this excess plants the seeds of the ever dangerous belief in the venerable agedness of the human race, the belief that one is a latecomer and epigone; this excess throws an age into the dangerous attitude of self-irony, and from this into the even more dangerous attitude of cynicism: however, in the latter it matures more and

more in the direction of a cunning, egoistical praxis through which its vital forces are paralyzed and ultimately destroyed.

Now let us return to our first proposition: the modern human being suffers from a weakened personality. Just as the Roman from the age of the Empire became un-Roman in regard to the world that was at his feet, just as he lost himself in the influx of foreign influences and degenerated in the cosmopolitan carnival of gods, customs, and arts, so the same must happen to the modern human being, who continually has his historical artists prepare for him the festival of a world's fair. He has become a spectator who strolls about enjoying himself, and he has been reduced to a condition in which even great wars and great revolutions can scarcely change anything even for a moment. Before the war is even over, it has already been transformed into a hundred thousand pages of printed paper, it has already been served up as the latest delicacy to the exhausted palates of the history-hungry. It seems almost impossible that a richer, fuller tone might even be produced by the mightiest strumming of the strings: it promptly fades out, in the very next moment it has already dissolved into a faint historical echo. Expressed in moral terms: you no longer succeed in holding on to the sublime, your deeds are sudden claps, not rolling thunder. Even if you accomplish the greatest and most wonderful things, they will still descend silent and unsung into Orcus. For the moment you cover your deeds with the canopy of history, art takes flight. Anyone who seeks to understand, calculate, or comprehend in a moment when he should stand in prolonged awe at the sublime as the incomprehensible, might be called rational, but only in the sense in which Schiller speaks of the rationality of rational people: he fails to see some things that even a child sees; he fails to hear some things that even a child hears. And it is precisely these things that are important. Because he does not understand this, his understanding is more childish than a child, more simple than simplemindedness—in spite of the many clever wrinkles in his parchmentlike features and the virtuosity of his fingers when it comes to untangling

what is entangled. What this means is: he has destroyed and lost his instinct; he can now no longer trust in the "divine animal" and give it free rein when his rationality wavers and his path leads him through deserts. The individual thus becomes hesitant and uncertain and can no longer believe in himself; he sinks into himself, into his interior, which in this case means into nothing but the cumulative jumble of acquired knowledge that has no outward effect, of learning that fails to become life. If we take a look at their exterior, we notice how the expulsion of the instincts by means of history has nearly transformed human beings into mere abstractions and shadows: no one runs the risk of baring his own person, but instead disguises himself behind the mask of the cultivated man, the scholar, the poet, the politician. If we take hold of these masks, believing that they are serious and not just part of a farce—since all of them affect such seriousness—then suddenly we find ourselves holding in our hands nothing but rags and colorful tatters. This is why we should no longer allow ourselves to be deceived, why we should demand of them: "Either take off your jackets or be what you seem." No longer should every person who is serious by nature become a Don Quixote, since he has better things to do than to grapple with such would-be realities. But he must in any event take a close look, and every time he discovers a mask he should shout "Halt! Who goes there?" and rip off the person's disguise. How strange! One would think that above all else history would encourage people to be *honest*—even if only to be an honest fool. And previously this was always its effect: only today is this no longer so! Historical cultivation and the bourgeois cloak of universality rule simultaneously. Although "free personality" was never before spoken of in such glowing terms, we see no personalities at all, much less free ones; instead we see nothing but anxiously disguised universal human beings. The individual has withdrawn into his interior: on the exterior we see no trace of it, whereby we may doubt whether there can be any causes without effects. Or is it necessary to have a race of eunuchs to stand guard over the great histori-

cal world-harem? Certainly pure objectivity is quite becoming in eunuchs. It almost seems as if the task is to watch over history so that nothing will ever come of it but history stories—but certainly no events! This would also prevent personalities from becoming "free"—that is to say, truthful to themselves and truthful to others in both word and deed. Only this truthfulness can bring to light the distress and internal misery of the modern human being, and only then can art and religion, as true helpers, take the place of that anxiously concealing convention and masquerade, in order jointly to plant the seeds of a culture that answers to true needs and that does not solely teach us—as does the universal cultivation of today—to lie to ourselves about these needs and thereby become walking lies.

Into what unnatural, artificial, and in any event unworthy states the most truthful of all scholarly disciplines, the honest, naked goddess Philosophy, must be reduced in an age that suffers from universal cultivation! In a world of such coerced external uniformity she remains the scholarly monologue of a lonely wanderer, the chance prey of the individual, the hidden secret or harmless chatter of aged academics and children. No one dares to fulfill the law of philosophy in himself, no one lives philosophically, with that simple manly loyalty that compelled an ancient, if he had once declared loyalty to the Stoa, to act as a Stoic wherever he was and whatever he did. All modern philosophizing is political and policed, limited by governments, churches, academies, customs, and human cowardice to scholarly pretense: it is satisfied with the sigh "if only," or with the knowledge of the "once upon a time." In the context of historical cultivation, philosophy has no rights if it seeks to be more than just an inwardly restrained knowledge without effect. If only the modern human being were more courageous and resolute, if only he were not an inward creature even in his enmities, he would banish philosophy. As it is, he contents himself with bashfully covering her nudity. To be sure, we think, write, publish, speak, and teach philosophically—as long as it only goes this far, just about everything is

permitted. But in action, in so-called life, it is different: here only one thing is ever permitted and everything else forbidden, since that's the way historical cultivation wants it. "Are these still human beings," we then ask ourselves, "or are they perhaps merely machines that think, write, and speak?"

Goethe once said of Shakespeare: "No one despised the material costume more than he; he knows the inner human costume quite well, and in this all of us are identical. It has been asserted that he portrayed the Romans splendidly; I don't think this is so. They are nothing but flesh-and-blood Englishmen, and yet they are certainly human beings, human beings from head to foot, and even the Roman toga fits them well." Now, I ask you if it would be at all possible to present today's literati, popular leaders, functionaries, and politicians as Romans. It could not possibly work, because they are not human beings, but only flesh-and-blood compendia, and as such, concrete abstractions, as it were. Even if they should happen to have character and a manner of their own, it is buried so deep down in them that it can never make its way out into the light of day; if they are human beings at all, then only for someone who "examines their innards." For anyone else they are something else, not human beings, not gods, not animals, but historically cultivated products of cultivation, cultivation through and through, image, form without demonstrable content, unfortunately bad form, and, moreover, uniform. And may the reader now understand and ponder my proposition: *history can be endured only by strong personalities; it completely extinguishes weak ones.* The reason for this is that history bewilders feeling and sensibility wherever they are not strong enough to take themselves as the measure of the past. Those who no longer dare to trust themselves, but instead instinctively turn to history for advice and ask it "How should I feel in this instance?" gradually become actors out of timorousness and play a role—usually even many roles, which explains why they play them so badly and shallowly. Gradually all congruence between the man and his historical domain disappears; we see brash little schoolboys

treating the Romans as if they were their equals, and they dig and grub about in the Greek poets as if they were *corpora* laid out for dissection, as if they were mere *vilia*, as their own *corpora* may well be. Assuming someone were to concern himself with Democritus; the question always occurs to me, Why not Heraclitus? Or Philo? Or Bacon? Or Descartes—or anyone else, for that matter? And then: Why a philosopher, anyway? Why not a poet, an orator? And: Why must it be a Greek, why not an Englishman, a Turk? Isn't the past large enough for you to find something that does not make you look so ridiculously arbitrary? But, as I have said, we are dealing with a race of eunuchs; and for a eunuch one woman is just like any other, just a woman, woman-in-herself, the eternally unapproachable—and hence it makes no difference what you do, as long as history itself remains neatly "objective" and is preserved by those who themselves can never make history. And since the Eternal Feminine will never draw you upward, you drag it down to your level, and since you are neuters, you consider history to be a neuter, as well. But lest someone be led to believe that I am earnestly comparing history with the Eternal Feminine, let me state clearly that, quite to the contrary, I consider it to be the Eternal Masculine. But for those who are "historically cultivated" through and through it cannot make much difference whether it is one or the other: for they themselves are neither man nor woman, nor even hermaphrodite, but instead always only neuters—or, in more cultivated terms, simply the Eternal Objective.

Once personalities have been snuffed out in the manner just depicted, reduced to eternal subjectlessness—or, as they say, to "objectivity"—then nothing can affect them any longer; even if something good and just should occur, as action, as poetry, or as music, at once those hollowed out by cultivation will pass over the work and inquire into the history of its author. If the author has already created several works, then he must immediately submit to an interpretation of his past development and the probable course of his future development. Immedi-

ately he is compared to others, dissected regarding the choice and treatment of his material, torn apart, then cleverly put back together again in a new way, and generally admonished and reprimanded. Even if something that is most astonishing should occur—the mob of the historically neutral is always on the spot, ready to survey and supervise the author from afar. Immediately the echo resounds: but always as "critique," while just a short time earlier the critics had not even dreamed of the possibility of the event. At no point does the work give rise to an effect, but always only to a "critique," and the critique likewise produces no effect, but instead is only subjected to a further critique. They have struck an agreement, moreover, that many critiques are to be regarded as an effect, few critiques as a failure. But basically, despite this kind of "effect," everything remains as it was: to be sure, for some time people jabber in a novel way, and then later in some other novel way, but meanwhile they keep on doing what they have always done. The historical cultivation of our critics does not even permit them to produce an effect in the true sense of that word, namely, an effect on life and action: even the blackest writing is absorbed by their blotting paper; even on the most graceful drawing they smear their fat brushstrokes that are supposed to be seen as corrections. Then that's the end of it. But their critical pens never cease to flow, for they have lost control of them, and instead of guiding their pens they are guided by them. It is precisely in this immoderation of their critical outpourings, in this lack of self-mastery, in what the Romans called *impotentia*, that the weakness of the modern personality is disclosed.

6

But enough about this weakness. Let's turn instead to one of the much-touted strengths of the modern human being by addressing the admittedly painful question whether he has the right, on the basis of his well-known historical "objectivity," to call himself strong, that is *just*, and just to a higher degree than the human beings of other ages. Is it true that this ob-

jectivity has its origin in a heightened need and longing for justice? Or does it, as the effect of utterly different causes, just make it appear that justice is the genuine cause of this effect? Does it perhaps seduce us into a dangerous—because all too flattering—prejudice about the virtues of the modern human being?—Socrates regarded it as an affliction bordering on madness to imagine oneself in the possession of a virtue that one did not possess; and certainly such a delusion is more dangerous than its opposite, the delusion of suffering from a flaw, from a vice. For by means of this latter delusion it is perhaps at least possible to become better, but the former illusion makes the human being or the age worse with every passing day—that is, in this instance, more unjust.

Truly, no one deserves our veneration more than those who possess the urge and the strength for justice. For in justice, the highest, rarest virtues are united and hidden, just as an unfathomable sea receives and absorbs all the rivers that flow into it from all directions. The hand of the just person with the authority to sit in judgment no longer trembles when it holds the scales; unbending toward himself, he adds weight upon weight; his eye betrays no emotion when the scales rise or fall, and his voice sounds neither harsh nor halting when he pronounces the verdict. If he were a cold demon of knowledge, he would exude the icy atmosphere of a superhumanly horrible majesty that we would have to fear rather than revere; but that he is a human being and yet still attempts to rise up from pardonable doubt to rigorous certainty, from tolerant clemency to the imperative "you must," from the rare virtue of generosity to the rarest of all virtues, justice; that he now resembles that demon of knowledge, without ever being anything other than a poor human being; and above all, that in every moment he must do penance for his own humanity and tragically consume himself in pursuit of an impossible virtue—all this places him in solitary heights as the *most venerable* exemplar of the human species. For he seeks truth; however, not merely as cold, inconsequential knowledge, but rather as the ordering, punishing

judge; truth not as the egoistic possession of the individual, but rather as the sacred legitimation to shift all the boundaries of egoistic possessions—truth, in a word, as Last Judgment, and by no means as the captured prey and the pleasure of the individual hunter. Only insofar as the truthful person has the unconditional will to be just is there anything great in that striving for truth that everywhere is so thoughtlessly glorified: whereas in the eyes of those who are not so clear-sighted an entire host of the most different impulses—impulses such as curiosity, fear of boredom, disfavor, vanity, desire for amusement, which have nothing whatsoever to do with truth—merge with that striving for truth that has its roots in justice. To be sure, the world then appears to be full of those who "serve truth," and yet the virtue of justice is rarely present, even more rarely recognized, and almost always mortally hated; whereas by contrast, the host of sham virtues has at all times been received with honor and pomp. Few people truly serve the truth, because only a few people possess the pure will to be just, and of these even fewer possess the strength to be able to be just. It is by no means sufficient to possess solely the will to justice, and the most horrible afflictions have befallen humanity precisely due to this urge to justice that lacks the power to judge. This is why the general welfare would require nothing *more* than to sow as widely as possible the seeds of the power to judge, so that we would always be able to distinguish the fanatics from the judge, the blind desire to be a judge from the conscious strength that makes one capable of judging. But where might we find the means for planting the power to judge!—for whenever we speak to people about truth and justice, they will eternally persist in their hesitant vacillation over whether it is a fanatic or a judge who is speaking to them. This is why we should excuse them if they have always welcomed with special pleasure those "servants of truth" who possess neither the will nor the strength to judge, and who set themselves the task of pursuing "pure, ineffective" knowledge—or, to state it more bluntly, a truth that amounts to nothing. There are very many

indifferent truths; there are problems whose correct solution does not even cost us any effort, let alone a sacrifice. In this indifferent and safe realm it may well be easy for someone to succeed at becoming a cold demon of knowledge. But despite this! Even if in especially favored ages entire cohorts of scholars and researchers are transformed into such demons—it unfortunately still remains possible that such an age would suffer from a lack of rigorous and great justice—from the lack, in short, of the most noble kernel of the so-called urge to truth.

Now, picture to yourself the present-day historical virtuoso: is he the most just man of his age? It is true, he has cultivated in himself a sensibility so tender and sensitive that absolutely nothing human is alien to him; his lyre can echo in kindred tones the sounds of the most diverse ages and persons; he has become an echoing passivity whose resonance, in turn, has a resounding effect on other passivities of the same sort, until ultimately the air of an age is filled with the buzzing counterpoint of such tender and kindred echoes. Yet it seems to me that only the harmonics, as it were, of that original historical note remain audible: the harshness and power of the original can no longer be divined in the thin and shrill sound of the lyre strings. Moreover, the original tone usually awakened deeds, difficulties, and terrors, whereas this lyre tone just lulls us to sleep and turns us into gentle epicures. It is as though the *Eroica* symphony had been arranged for two flutes and were intended for the benefit of dreaming opium smokers. Already from this we can gauge how things stand with these virtuosos where the loftiest claim of the modern human being, the claim to higher and purer justice, is concerned. This virtue never has anything pleasing about it; it knows no arousing tremors, it is harsh and terrible. Measured by its standard, how low even magnanimity stands on the scale of virtues; magnanimity, which is the trait of a few rare historians! But many more of them arrive at mere tolerance, at accepting the validity of what simply cannot be denied, at measured and well-meaning ordering and prettifying—under the clever assumption that the inexperienced per-

son will interpret it as the virtue of justice when the past is recounted without harsh accents and without the expression of hatred. But only superior strength can sit in judgment; weakness must be tolerant, unless it wants to feign strength and transform justice sitting on its bench into an actress. There is yet one more frightful species of historian: competent, rigorous, and honest characters—but narrow-minded. They display both the will to justice and the juridical pathos, but all their verdicts are false for roughly the same reason that the judgments of ordinary juries are false. How improbable it is that historical talent would appear in such abundance! And this is true even if we disregard the disguised egoists and partisans that wear an objective look on their face as they play their evil game. It is also true if we likewise disregard those wholly unreflective people who write as historians in the naive faith that, according to all popular opinions, their age is right, and that to write in conformity with this age amounts to exactly the same thing as being just—a belief on which every religion thrives, and about which nothing more need be said where religions are concerned. Measuring past opinions and deeds according to the widespread opinions of the present moment is what these naive historians call "objectivity." It is in these that they discover the canon of all truth; their aim is to force the past to fit the mold of their fashionable triviality. By contrast, they call "subjective" every form of historiography that refuses to accept these popular opinions as canonical.

And might not an illusion creep into the meaning of the word "objectivity" even when interpreted in the loftiest manner? When taken in this sense the word is understood as the condition in which the historian observes all the motives and consequences of an event with such purity that it has absolutely no effect on his subjectivity; it connotes that aesthetic phenomenon, that detachment from personal interest with which the painter, in a stormy setting among lightning and thunder, or on a tempestuous sea, contemplates his inner picture; it connotes that total immersion in things. However, it is a

superstition that the image that things produce in such an aesthetically attuned person reproduces the empirical essence of these things. Or are we to suppose that in such moments the things etch, sketch, or photograph themselves, as it were, onto this pure passivity by means of their own activity?

This would be mythology, and bad mythology, at that. In addition, one would be forgetting that precisely this moment is the most powerful and most spontaneous creative moment in the inner being of the artist, a compositional moment of the highest sort, whose result will probably be an aesthetically true picture, not a historically true one. To conceive history objectively in this way is the silent work of the dramatist; that is, to think of all things as interrelated, to weave isolated events into a totality—always with the presupposition that a unity of plan must be inserted into the things if it is not already inherent in them. This is how the human being spins his web over the past and subdues it; this is how his artistic urge expresses itself—not, however, his urge to truth or to justice. Objectivity and justice have nothing to do with one another. It would be possible to conceive of a historiography that does not contain a single drop of common empirical truth and that yet could lay claim in a high degree to the predicate of "objectivity." Indeed, Grillparzer dares to declare: "What is history other than the way in which the spirit of the human being assimilates what for him are *impenetrable occurrences*; connects things of which only God knows whether they belong together; substitutes the comprehensible for the incomprehensible; projects his concepts of an external purposiveness onto a totality that probably has only an internal purposiveness; and assumes chance when a thousand tiny causes are at work. At the same time, every human being has his own particular necessity, so that a million curved and straight lines run parallel to one another, intersect one another, reinforce and impede one another, run forward and backward, so that for each other they take on the character of the fortuitous and thereby make it impossible—apart from the influences of natural occurrences—

to demonstrate any overarching, wholly comprehensive necessity in events." However, as the result of that "objective" view of things, just such a necessity is supposed to be brought to light! This is a presupposition that, when pronounced by the historian as an article of faith, can only assume a curious form. Schiller, of course, is quite clear about the essentially subjective nature of this assumption when he says of the historian: "One phenomenon after another begins to escape the realm of blind chance and lawless freedom and to integrate itself as a well-fitting part into a harmonious totality—*which exists, of course, only in his imagination.*" But what are we supposed to make of the following assertion by a celebrated historical virtuoso that is introduced with such conviction and that hovers artificially between tautology and nonsense: "The fact of the matter is that all human actions are subject to the gentle, often unnoticed, but powerful and irresistible course of events"? In a statement like this we perceive not so much enigmatic truth as we do unenigmatic untruth, much as in the assertion by Goethe's gardener, "Nature can be forced, but not compelled"; or, on the sign of a carnival booth, as related by Swift: "Here you can see the largest elephant in the world, with the exception of itself." For where, ultimately, is the opposition between human actions and the course of events? I am particularly struck by the fact that such historians as the one whose statement we quoted above no longer have anything to teach us as soon as they fall into generalities, thereby betraying in obscurities the sense of their own weakness. In other scholarly disciplines generalities are all-important, at least to the extent that they contain laws; but if such assertions as the one cited earlier are meant to be regarded as laws, we must object that in that case the labor of the historian is wasted. For whatever remains at all truthful in such statements after subtracting from them that obscure, irreducible residue is well known and even trivial, since it is self-evident to any person with even the smallest range of experience. To incommode entire nations and devote years of tiresome labor to this effort is tantamount to amass-

ing experimental knowledge in the natural sciences even after one already has enough experimental evidence to establish the law in question. Incidentally, according to Zöllner, it is just such a senseless excess of experimental evidence that plagues the natural sciences today. If the value of a drama lies solely in its final and primary thought, then the drama itself is a most lengthy, roundabout, and tiresome path to this goal; and thus I hope that history will not see its own significance in general thoughts as a kind of blossom and fruit. I hope, instead, that its value lies precisely in its ability to intelligently circumscribe, to elevate a well-known, perhaps even commonplace theme, an everyday melody, heightening it into a comprehensive symbol, and thereby intimating in the original theme a whole world of profundity, power, and beauty.

But to achieve this requires above all a great artistic power, a creative floating above things, a loving immersion in the empirical data, a poetic elaboration of given types—certainly, objectivity is necessary for this as well, but as a positive trait. But so often objectivity is only a phrase. Affectation of tranquillity takes the place of that inwardly flashing, outwardly unmoved and darkly tranquil eye of the artist; just as lack of pathos and moral strength tend to be disguised as piercing iciness of observation. In certain instances even banality of sentiment—the wisdom of the common man whose boringness alone is responsible for the impression of tranquillity and emotional calm that it makes—dares to show its face so that it might be passed off as that artistic condition in which the subject becomes silent and wholly unnoticeable. What is then searched out is what does not arouse any excitement at all, and the driest phrase suits just fine. Indeed, one goes so far as to assume that anyone who is *totally disinterested* in a particular moment of the past is the one who must be called upon to portray it. This is the way in which philologists and Greeks often relate to each other: with total disinterest—and this is what is then called "objectivity"! Where it is precisely a matter of portraying the loftiest, rarest of things, this intentional, ostentatious disinvolvement,

this artificial, soberly superficial motivation is utterly revolting—at least when it is the historian's *vanity* that impels him to assume this indifference posing as objectivity. When dealing with such authors we are well advised to base our judgment on the principle that every man's vanity is directly proportional to his lack of intelligence. No, at least be honest! Do not seek the semblance of that artistic power that can truly be called objectivity, do not seek the semblance of justice if you have not been ordained to the terrible calling of the just person. As if it were the duty of every age to have to be just to everything that ever existed! On the contrary, ages and generations never have the right to be the judges of all prior ages and generations: this unpleasant mission always falls only to individuals, even to the rarest individuals, at that. Who compels you to sit in judgment? And then, too—just ask yourselves whether you could even be just if you wanted to! As judges you would have to stand higher than those you judge; but you merely come after them. The guests that come to the table last must rightly content themselves with the last places, and you want to have the first? Well, then at least accomplish the highest and greatest thing; perhaps then they will actually make room for you, even if you are the last to arrive.

Only from the highest power of the present can you interpret the past; only with the greatest exertion of your noblest qualities will you divine what in the past is great and worth knowing and preserving. Like for like! Otherwise you will drag the past down to your level. Do not trust any historiography that does not spring from the mind of the rarest intellects; but you will always be able to gauge the quality of their intellect when they find it necessary to state a general truth or to reformulate an age-old truth: the genuine historian must have the power to recast what is age-old into something never heard of before, to proclaim a general truth with such simplicity and profundity that we overlook the simplicity due to the profundity, and the profundity due to the simplicity. No one can be a great historian, an artistic human being, and a blockhead at one and the same time;

on the other hand, we should not look down on those laborers who cart, heap, and winnow just because they will never become great historians, but still less should we mistake them for great historians. Instead, we should recognize them as necessary apprentices and journeymen in the service of their master; as, for example, the French, with greater naiveté than it is possible to find among Germans, are accustomed to speaking of the "historiens de M. Thiers." These laborers are eventually supposed to become great scholars, but for all that they can never become masters. A great scholar and a great blockhead—these two are easier to combine under one and the same hat.

Thus: history can be written only by the experienced and superior person. The person whose experience of some things is not greater and superior to the experience of all other people will also not be able to interpret the great and superior things of the past. The voice of the past is always the voice of an oracle; only if you are architects of the future and are familiar with the present will you understand the oracular voice of the past. Today we tend to explain the extraordinarily profound and extensive effect of the Delphic oracle with the claim that the Delphic priests had precise knowledge of the past; it is time we recognized that only those who build the future have the right to sit in judgment of the past. By looking ahead, setting yourself a great goal, you will simultaneously subdue that overexuberant analytical impulse that currently reduces the present to a wasteland and makes all tranquil growth and maturation almost impossible. Draw around yourselves the fence of a great, all-embracing hope, of a hopeful striving. Create within yourselves an image to which the future should conform, and forget the false conviction that you are epigones. You have enough to ponder and invent by pondering that future life, but do not ask history to show you how and by what means. If, instead, you begin to immerse yourselves in the histories of great men, then you will derive from them the supreme commandment of becoming mature and escaping the paralyzing education spell cast upon the present age—a spell that sees its utility

in preventing you from becoming mature so that it can master and exploit you in your immaturity. And if you are looking for biographies, then please ignore those whose titles sound the refrain "Mr. So-and-So and His Age"; instead, choose biographies whose title page reads "A Fighter Against His Age." Satisfy your souls by reading Plutarch and dare to believe in yourselves by believing in his heroes. With a hundred such unmodernly educated human beings—that is, human beings who have matured and grown accustomed to the heroic—the entire noisy sham cultivation of this age could now be silenced once and for all.—

7

The historical sensibility, when it rules *uncontrolled* and is allowed to realize all its consequences, uproots the future because it destroys illusions and robs existing things of that atmosphere in which alone they are able to live. Historical justice, even if it is really practiced with the purest of intentions, is a terrible virtue for the simple reason that it always undermines and destroys living things; its verdict is always a death sentence. If no constructive impulse is at work behind the historical impulse, if things are not destroyed and swept away so that a future that is already alive in our hopes can erect its house on cleared ground, if justice alone rules, then the creative instinct is enfeebled and discouraged. A religion, for example, that is supposed to be transformed under the rule of pure justice into historical knowledge, a religion that is supposed to be understood scientifically through and through, will be destroyed as soon as it reaches this goal. The reason for this is that every historical audit always brings to light so much falsehood, coarseness, inhumanity, absurdity, and violence that the pious atmosphere of illusion, in which alone everything that wants to live is actually capable of life, vanishes. However, only in love, only in the shadow of the illusion of love, does the human being create—that is, only in the unconditional belief in perfection and justness. Everyone who is forced no longer to love uncondi-

tionally has been cut off from the roots of his strength; he cannot help but wither, that is, become dishonest. In such effects art is the antithesis of history, and only when history allows itself to be transformed into a work of art, into a pure aesthetic structure, can it perhaps retain or even arouse instincts. However, this type of historiography would run wholly counter to the analytical and unartistic temper of our age; indeed, our age would view it as a counterfeit. But a history that only destroys without being guided by an inner constructive impulse in the long run makes its instruments blasé and unnatural, for such human beings destroy illusions, and "anyone who destroys illusions in himself and others is punished by nature, the sternest of all tyrants." To be sure, one can occupy oneself with history for quite some time in a completely harmless and thoughtless manner, just as if it were one occupation among many. Modern theology, in particular, seems to have gotten mixed up with history in a purely harmless way, and now it scarcely wants to notice that by doing so—and probably against its own will—it has entered into the service of Voltaire's *écrasez*. No one should presume that it is based on new, powerful, constructive instincts; in order for this to be the case, we would have to accept the so-called Protestant Union as the womb of a new religion, and take, say, the jurist Holtzendorf (who edited and introduced the even much more so-called Protestant Bible) to be John the Baptist at the River Jordan. For a short time, perhaps, the Hegelian philosophy that still steams in the heads of some older people will help to propagate that harmlessness; for instance, by distinguishing the "idea of Christianity" from its manifold and imperfect "phenomenal forms," and by spinning the tale that it is the "fancy of the Idea" to reveal itself in ever purer forms, revealing itself ultimately in its purest, most transparent—indeed, scarcely visible—form in the brain of the present-day *theologus liberalis vulgaris*. But if an impartial person listens to these purest of all Christianities speaking about the earlier impure Christianities, he gets the impression that they are not talking about Christianity at all, but rather about—well,

just what are we supposed to think when the "greatest theologian of the century" designates Christianity as the religion that permits us "to empathize with all actual and even with some merely possible religions," and when the "true church" is supposed to be one that "becomes a fluid mass where there are no defined outlines, where each part is sometimes here, sometimes there, and in which all things peacefully mingle." Once again, what are we supposed to think?

What we can learn about Christianity is that under the influence of a historicizing treatment it has become blasé and unnatural, to the point that ultimately a perfectly historical—that is, just—treatment dissolves it into pure knowledge of Christianity and thereby destroys it. We can study this same process in all living things: they cease to live when they have been totally dissected, and they live a pained and sickly life as soon as we begin to practice historical dissection on them. There are people who believe in the revolutionary and reforming healing power of German music among the Germans; they respond with anger and regard it as an outrage against what is most vital in our culture when scholarly rubbish is already heaped upon such men as Mozart and Beethoven and they are forced by the torture system of historical criticism to answer a thousand impertinent questions. Aren't the things whose vital effects are by no means exhausted prematurely done away with, or at least paralyzed, when we direct our curiosity at the countless trivialities of the life and the works and go out in search of intellectual problems when we should be learning to live and to forget all problems? Just transport in your imagination a few of these modern biographers to the birthplace of Christianity or of the Lutheran Reformation; their sober, pragmatic lust for the new would be just enough to render every ghostly *actio in distans* impossible, just as the most wretched animal can prevent the mightiest oak tree from coming into existence by eating the acorn from which it would sprout. All living things need to be surrounded by an atmosphere, a mysterious cloud of vapor; if this cloud is removed, if a religion, an art, a genius,

is condemned to be a planet orbiting without an atmosphere, then we should cease to be surprised that they quickly wither, becoming hard and unfruitful. That's how it is with all great things, "which never prosper without some illusion," as Hans Sachs puts it in *Die Meistersinger*.

But even every people, indeed, every human being who wants to become *mature* needs such an enveloping illusion, such a protecting and enveloping cloud; but today we hate the process of maturation itself, because we honor history more than we do life. Indeed, we rejoice in the fact that "science has begun to take control over life." It is possible that this will occur, but certainly a life controlled in this manner has little worth, because it is much less *life*, and because it guarantees much less life for the future than did a former mode of life dominated not by knowledge but by instincts and powerful illusions. But, as stated earlier, ours is not supposed to be the era of harmonious personalities that are complete and fully mature, but rather of common, utilitarian labor. That simply means: human beings must be broken in to serve the purposes of the age, so that they can be put to work at the earliest possible moment; they are supposed to go to work in the factory of general utility before they are mature—indeed, so that they do not become mature—because allowing them to mature would be a luxury that would divert a great deal of energy away from "the labor market." Some birds are blinded so that they will sing more beautifully: I do not believe that present-day human beings sing more beautifully than their grandfathers did, but I do know that they have been blinded at an early age. However, the means, the infamous means, that are employed in order to blind them is *a light that is all too bright, all too sudden, and all too variable*. Young people are whipped onward through the millennia: young men who understand nothing about war, about diplomacy, or about trade policy are presumed to be worthy of an introduction to political history. But we moderns run through art galleries and listen to concerts in just the same way that young people run through history. We sense, of course, that one thing sounds dif-

ferent from another, that one thing has a different effect from another: increasingly we lose this sense of surprise, so that we are no longer overly amazed at anything and, ultimately, find satisfaction in everything—this is what is called historical sensibility, historical cultivation. Stated noneuphemistically: the massive influx of impressions is so great; surprising, barbaric, and violent things press so overpoweringly—"balled up into hideous clumps"—in on the youthful soul; that it can save itself only by taking recourse in premeditated stupidity. Wherever a more refined, stronger consciousness existed, a new sensation most likely occurs: nausea. The young person has become an outcast and is skeptical of all customs and concepts. Now he knows that in every age things were different, that it does not matter what you are. In melancholy apathy he lets opinion after opinion pass him by and understands Hölderlin's mood when reading what Laertius Diogenes has to say about the lives and teachings of Greek philosophers: "Here I have once again experienced something that already occurred to me several times before: that the ephemeral and changing character of human thoughts and systems struck me as more tragic than the destinies we usually take to be the only real ones." No, such an overflowing, stupefying, and violent historicizing is certainly not necessary for youth, as the ancients have demonstrated; indeed, it is extremely dangerous, as the moderns have demonstrated. But now consider the student of history, who already in his childhood has clearly inherited a premature jadedness. Now he has acquired the "method" for accomplishing his own work, the proper technique, and the noble tone of his master; a wholly isolated chapter of the past falls victim to his acumen and the method he has learned. He has already produced something—or, to express it with greater dignity—"created" something; through this deed he has now become the servant of truth and master in the world domain of history. If already as a child he was "complete," he is now already overcomplete: you only need to shake him, and his wisdom falls with a clatter into your lap. But this wisdom is rotten, and every apple

has its worm. Believe me: when human beings are forced to work in the factory of scholarship and become useful before they are mature, then in a short time scholarship itself is just as ruined as the slaves who are exploited in this factory from an early age. I regret that it is already necessary to make use of the jargon of slave owners and employers in order to describe such conditions, which in principle should be conceived free of utility and freed from the necessities of life. But the words "factory," "labor market," "supply," "utilization"—along with all the other auxiliary verbs that egoism now employs—involuntarily cross one's lips when one seeks to depict the youngest generation of scholars. Solid mediocrity is becoming more and more mediocre, and scholarship more and more useful in the economic sense. Actually, the most recent scholars are wise only in one single respect, but in this they are wiser than all past human beings; in all other respects they are merely infinitely different—to express it cautiously—than all the scholars of the old school. Nevertheless, they demand honors and advantages for themselves, as if the state and public opinion were obliged to take their new coins to be just as valuable as the old. The carters have negotiated a labor contract among themselves and declared genius to be superfluous—by reminting every carter as a genius. A later age will probably be able to tell by looking at their buildings that they were carted together rather than constructed. To those who tirelessly mouth the modern cries to battle and to sacrifice, "Division of labor!" "In rank and file!," we have to say clearly and bluntly: if you want to further scholarship as quickly as possible, then you will also destroy it as quickly as possible, just as the hen that you artificially force to lay eggs as quickly as possible also perishes. Granted, scholarship has been furthered at an astonishingly quick pace in the last decades, but just look at the scholars, the exhausted hens. They are truly not "harmonious" natures: they can only cackle more than ever because they are laying eggs more frequently. To be sure, the eggs have kept getting smaller (although the books have only gotten bigger). The final and natural con-

sequence of this is that universally favored "popularization" (along with "feminization" and "infantization") of scholarship; that is, the infamous tailoring of the cloak of scholarship to the body of the "mixed public"—to make use just this once of a language suited to tailors to designate an activity suited to tailors. Goethe saw in this an abuse, and he demanded that scholarship have an impact on the outside world only by means of an *enhanced praxis*. Moreover, older generations of scholars had good reasons for considering such an abuse to be difficult and burdensome. Younger scholars have equally good reasons for finding it easy, since they themselves—with the exception of a tiny niche of knowledge—are a part of this mixed public, and they bear its needs within them. They need only to sit down comfortably somewhere in order to succeed in opening up their tiny area of study to the compulsive curiosity of the mixed general public. In retrospect, they give this act of comfort the designation "a modest condescension of the scholar to the people," whereas basically the scholar—insofar as he is not a scholar but actually a plebeian—only descends to his own level. Create for yourselves the concept of a "people": you can never conceive it to be noble and lofty enough. If you were to think highly of the people, you would be merciful toward them and you would take care not to offer them your historical *aqua fortis* as a refreshing elixir of life. But in your heart of hearts you think poorly of them, because you are incapable of having a sincere and profound respect for their future, and you act like practical pessimists—I mean, like people who are guided by the presentiment of disaster and who therefore become indifferent and careless about the welfare of others, indeed, about their own welfare. If only the ground will continue to support *us*! And if it ceases to support us, then that's all right, too.—This is how they feel, and they live an *ironic* existence.

8

It may seem strange, but surely not contradictory, that I ascribe to our age, an age that tends so perceptibly and insistently

to break out into the most carefree jubilation over its historical cultivation, a kind of *ironic self-consciousness*, a haunting inkling that there is no cause for jubilation, a fear that all the amusement of historical knowledge will perhaps soon come to an end. Goethe presented us with a similar puzzle with regard to individual personalities in his remarkable characterization of Newton. He finds at the base (or, to be more precise, at the top) of Newton's being "an obscure inkling of his own error," an expression observable only in the rare moments, as it were, of a superior, critical consciousness that attains a certain ironic perspective on his own necessary inner nature. Thus, it is precisely in the greater and more highly developed historical person that we find an awareness, often muted to the point of universal skepticism, of just how much incongruity and superstition are inherent in the belief that the education of a people must be as predominantly historical as it is today. After all, the strongest peoples—that is, those strong in both deeds and works—lived differently and educated their youth differently. But that incongruity, that superstition—so goes the skeptical objection—suits us historical latecomers, the last, anemic offspring of powerful and cheerful generations; it suits us, who seem to confirm Hesiod's prophecy that one day humans would have gray hair already at birth, and that Zeus would eradicate them as soon as this sign became visible. Historical cultivation is really a kind of congenital grayness, and it stands to reason that those who bear its sign at birth must arrive at the instinctive belief in the *old age of humanity*; but today it is befitting of old age that it be devoted to the preoccupations of the aged, namely, to retrospection, to tallying and closing accounts, to seeking comfort in the past by means of memories—in short, to historical cultivation. But the human race is a tough and tenacious thing and it dislikes being viewed in its progression—forward and backward—after millennia, or hardly even after hundreds of millennia. In other words, it *absolutely refuses* to be viewed by that infinitesimal atom, the individual human being, as a totality. For what is it about a couple of millennia

(or, expressed in different terms, the time period of 34 consecutive human lives at 60 years apiece) that permits us to speak of humanity's "youth" at the beginning of such a period, and of its "old age" at the end! Doesn't this paralyzing belief in an already withering humanity contain the misunderstanding of a Christian theological conception, inherited from the Middle Ages, of the imminent end of the world, the fearfully awaited Last Judgment? Isn't the heightened historical need to sit in judgment nothing but this same conception dressed up differently, as though ours, the last possible age, had itself been authorized to pass the Last Judgment on the entire past—a judgment that Christian belief certainly does not expect to come from humanity itself, but instead from the "Son of Man"? Previously this "*memento mori*," called out both to humanity and to the individual, was always a terribly painful goad and the pinnacle, as it were, of medieval knowledge and conscience. The phrase with which the modern age answers this call, "*memento vivere*," still sounds, to be quite frank, rather timid; it has no resonance, and almost seems to be insincere. For humanity is still fixed on the *memento mori*, and it betrays this by means of its universal need for history; despite the powerful beating of its wings, knowledge has not been able to break out into the open. A profound sense of hopelessness remains and has taken on that historical tinge with which today all historical education and cultivation is gloomily darkened. A religion that regards the last hour of a human life to be the most significant one, that predicts the end of life on earth and condemns all living things to live in the fifth act of a tragedy, certainly arouses the most profound and noble powers, but it is inimical to all attempts to sow the seeds of the new, to engage in daring experiments, to desire freely. It opposes every flight into the unknown, because it finds nothing to love or hope for there: only against its own will does it permit what is in the process of becoming to be forced upon it, so that, at the proper time, this becoming, which seduces to existence and lies about the value of existence, can be repudiated or sacrificed. What the Florentines did while under the

influence of Savonarola's calls to penance, undertaking those notorious sacrificial burnings of paintings, manuscripts, mirrors, and masks, is precisely what Christianity would like to do with every culture that incites people to go on striving and that bears that *memento vivere* as its motto. And if it is not possible to do this in a blunt and direct manner—say, by overpowering such cultures—then it can attain this end just as well by forming an alliance with historical cultivation—usually without the latter even being aware of this. And then, speaking in the name of this historical cultivation, it rejects with a shrug of the shoulders everything that is in the process of becoming and spreads over it the stigma of being a latecomer and epigone—in short, the stigma of congenital grayness. The harsh and profoundly serious reflection on the worthlessness of all occurrences, on the maturity of the world to pass judgment, has volatized into the skeptical awareness that it is, in any event, good to know all these occurrences, since it is too late to do anything better. This is how historical sensibility makes its servants passive and retrospective, and those who have come down with the historical fever become active only in those moments of forgetfulness when this historical sensibility is absent; and as soon as this action is completed, it is dissected, so that reflective analysis can prevent it from having any further effect and ultimately reduce it to bare "history." In this sense, we still live in the Middle Ages and history is still a disguised theology, just as the reverence that the unscholarly layman feels for the scholarly caste is a reverence handed down from the reverence previously reserved for the clergy. Today we give to scholarship—although, more sparingly—what people previously gave to the Church; but the fact that we give at all is attributable to the Church, not to the modern spirit, which, on the contrary, despite its other, more positive qualities, is notoriously stingy and a bungler when it comes to the noble virtue of generosity.

Perhaps this observation is displeasing, perhaps just as displeasing as my derivation of the excess of history from the medieval *memento mori* and from the hopelessness that Christian-

ity bears in its heart toward all the coming ages of earthly existence. But we should nevertheless try to substitute for this explanation, which I have advanced somewhat hesitantly, better explanations; for the origin of historical cultivation—as well as its intrinsic and wholly radical contradiction with the spirit of a "new age" and a "modern consciousness"—this origin *must* itself, in turn, be understood historically, history itself *must* solve the problem of history, knowledge *must* turn the goad upon itself—this threefold *must* is the imperative of the spirit of the "new age," provided that there is really something new, powerful, life-promoting, and original in it. Or is it perhaps true that we Germans—to leave the Romance peoples aside—in all higher matters of culture always had to be mere "descendants," for the simple reason that this was all that we *could* be. Wilhelm Wackernagel once expressed this in the following statement, which merits serious consideration: "We Germans are merely a people of descendants; in all our higher knowledge, and even in our beliefs, we have always been the heirs of the ancient world; even those who are inimical to it have no choice but to breathe in the immortal spirit of ancient classical cultivation along with the spirit of Christianity. And if someone were to succeed in removing these two elements from the living atmosphere that surrounds the inner human being, then not much would remain with which to sustain a spiritual life." But even if we were happy to accept our calling as descendants of antiquity, even if we were resolved to take this calling seriously and pursue it vigorously and to acknowledge this vigor as our distinguishing and unique privilege—in spite of this we would still have to ask whether we are forever doomed to being the *disciples of fading antiquity*. At some time or other we may be allowed gradually to set our goal higher and farther; at some time or other we should be able to praise ourselves for having recreated in ourselves the spirit of Hellenistic and Roman culture—even by means of our universal history—in such a fruitful and magnificent manner, so that we now, by way of the most noble reward, can charge ourselves with the even more prodi-

gious task of striving to go behind and beyond this Hellenistic world and seek our models in the primordial world of ancient Greece with all its greatness, naturalness, and humanity. *But here we will also find the reality of an essentially ahistorical cultivation and of a form of cultivation that despite—or precisely because of—this fact is indescribably rich and vital.* Even if we Germans were nothing but descendants—if we were to view such a cultivation as an inheritance we could make our own—then we could find no greater or prouder destiny than that of being descendants.

With this I mean to say only one thing, and one thing alone: that even the often painful thought of being epigones can, when conceived grandly, guarantee both to the individual and to a people a hope-filled longing for the future: insofar, at least, as we understand ourselves as heirs and descendants of the remarkable powers of antiquity and see in this our honor, our incentive. That is to say, not as anemic and stunted lateborn offspring of powerful generations, who eke out a cold existence as the antiquarians and grave diggers of these prior generations. To be sure, such lateborn offspring lead an ironic existence: destruction follows hot on the heels of their limping course through life. They shudder at it when they take pleasure in the past, for they are living memories; and yet without heirs, their memory is meaningless. Thus, they are overcome by the gloomy inkling that, since no future life can justify it, their life is an injustice.

However, what if we were to imagine such antiquarian late offspring suddenly exchanging their painfully ironic modesty for impudence; let's imagine them declaring in shrill voices: "Our race has now reached its apex, for only now has it attained knowledge of itself and been revealed to itself"—the result would be a spectacle in which, as in a parable, the enigmatic significance for German cultivation of a certain very famous philosophy would suddenly become clear. I do not believe that there was any dangerous deviation or turn in German cultivation in this century that did not become more dangerous due to the enormous and still spreading influence of this philoso-

phy—Hegelian philosophy. In truth, the belief that one is the lateborn offspring of prior ages is paralyzing and upsetting, but it must seem horrible and destructive when one day, in a brazen inversion, such a belief deifies this lateborn offspring as the true meaning and purpose of all previous historical events, when his knowing wretchedness is identified with the culmination of world history. It is just such a manner of looking at things that allowed the Germans to grow accustomed to speaking of the "world process" and justify their own age as the necessary result of this world process. This manner of viewing things has put history in the place of the other intellectual powers, art and religion, establishing it as the sole sovereign, insofar as history is the "self-realizing concept," "the dialectic of the spirit of nations," and the "Last Judgment."

Understood in this Hegelian manner, history has scornfully been dubbed the sojourn of God on earth—although this God, for his part, is himself only the product of history. But it was inside Hegelian heads that this God became transparent and comprehensible to himself, and it has already climbed up through all the dialectically possible stages of its process of becoming, up to the point of that self-revelation, so that for Hegel the apex and culmination of the world process coincided with his own existence in Berlin. Indeed, he might even have said that everything that came after him could actually be regarded as only a musical coda of the world-historical rondo—or, more precisely, as superfluous. He did not say this: instead, he instilled in those generations nurtured by his philosophy that admiration for the "power of history" that in almost every moment reverts to naked admiration of success and leads to the idolatry of the factual. This idolatry is now generally referred to with a very mythological and, moreover, very German expression: "to take account of the facts." But those who first learned to kneel down and bow their heads before the "power of history" eventually nod their "yes" as mechanically as a Chinese puppet to every power—regardless of whether it is a government, a public opinion, or a numerical majority—

and move their limbs in precisely that tempo with which whatever power pulls the strings. If every success contains within itself a reasonable necessity, if every occurrence represents the victory of what is logical or of the "Idea"—then fall to your knees at once and genuflect on every rung of the stepladder of "successes"! What, there are no longer ruling mythologies? What, religions are dying out? Just look at the religion of historical power; pay attention to the priests of the mythologies of the Idea and their skinned-up knees! Aren't all virtues in fact adherents of this new faith? Or is it not a sign of selflessness when the historical human being lets himself be made into an objective mirror? Is it not a sign of generosity to renounce all violence in heaven and on earth by worshipping in every form of violence nothing but violence in itself? Is it not a sign of justice if one constantly holds a balance in one's hands and watches to see which one, as the stronger and heavier of the two, tips the scales? And what a school of decorum such a view of history is! To accept everything objectively, get irate about nothing, love nothing, comprehend everything—oh, how that makes one soft and supple: and even if someone educated in this school were to get irate and angry in public, this makes us happy, for we know, after all, that he only means it artistically. It is *ira* and *studium*, and yet it is utterly *sine ira et studio*.

How old-fashioned my thoughts about this conglomerate of mythology and virtue are! But they just have to come out, even if they only make you laugh. So I would say that history always impresses upon us: "Once upon a time . . . ," with the moral: "Thou shalt not . . ." or "Thou shouldst not have . . . ." Thus history becomes a compendium of factual immorality. How gravely we would err if we were simultaneously to view history as the judge of this factual immorality! For example, it is an insult to morality that someone like Raphael had to die when he was only thirty-six years old: such a person should never die at all. Now if, as apologists of the factual, you want to come to history's defense, you will say: "Raphael expressed everything that was inside him; if he had lived longer, he would only

have created more beauty of the same type, not a new type of beauty," or something to that effect. You thereby become the devil's advocates by making success, the fact, into your idol: whereas the fact is always stupid and has at all times looked more like a calf than a god. Moreover, as apologists of history, ignorance is your prompter: for it is only because you do not really know what a *natura naturans* like Raphael is that you are not outraged to hear that he once lived and will never live again. Recently someone sought to inform us that at age eighty-two Goethe had exhausted himself: and yet I would gladly trade entire wagonloads of fresh, ultramodern lives for but a couple years of the "exhausted" Goethe just in order to participate in discussions like those Goethe had with Eckermann. This would be my way of protecting myself from all the fashionable teachings of the legionnaires of the moment. By comparison with such great people who are dead, how few living people have a right to live at all! That the many still live and those few no longer live is nothing but a brutal truth, that is, an incorrigible stupidity, a tactless "That's just the way it is," as opposed to morality that says: "It should not be this way." Yes, as opposed to morality! For you can discuss any virtue you like—justice, generosity, courage, the wisdom and pity of human beings—everywhere the human being is virtuous precisely because he rebels against that blind power of facts, against the tyranny of the real, and he subjects himself to laws that are not the laws of those historical fluctuations. He always swims against the historical tide, either because he struggles against his passions as those stupid facts closest to his existence, or because he commits himself to honesty while the glittering nets of lies are being spun all around him. If history were simply nothing other than "the world system of passion and error," then humans would have to read it the way Goethe advised us to read *Werther*: as if history were calling out to them "Be a man and don't follow me!" Fortunately, however, history also preserves the memory of the great fighters *against history*, that is, against the blind power of the real; and it ties itself to the whipping

post by exalting as the true historical natures precisely those who were little troubled by the "That's how it is," but instead pridefully followed a "This is how it should be." It is not the burial of their generation, but the founding of a new one that drives them unrelentingly onward; and if they themselves are lateborn offspring—there is a way to live that makes up for this—coming generations will know them only as the firstborn.

9

Is our age perhaps such a firstborn?—In fact, the vehemence of its historical sensibility is so great and expresses itself in such a universal and utterly unlimited manner that in this respect, at least, future ages will praise it as a firstborn—assuming, that is, that there will even be *future ages* at all that can be understood to be cultured. But this is precisely what remains seriously in doubt. In close proximity to the modern human being's pride stands his *self-irony*, his awareness that he must live in a historicizing and, as it were, twilight atmosphere, his fear that he will not be able to salvage for the future anything whatsoever of his youthful hopes and energies. Here and there some move even further in the direction of *cynicism* and justify the course of history, indeed, the entire development of the world, quite literally as occurring for the everyday utility of the modern human being, according to the cynical canon: things had to evolve in precisely the way they did, and the human being could not have become any different from human beings today, since it is futile to rebel against this "must." Those who cannot endure irony flee into the well-being of just this kind of cynicism; moreover, the last decade presents them with the gift of one of its most beautiful inventions, a well-rounded and full phrase to describe this cynicism: it calls their fashionable and absolutely unreflective way of living "the total surrender of one's personality to the world process." Personality and the world process! The world process and the personality of the earthly flea! If only we did not have to hear that hyperbole of hyperboles, the word "world, world, world," where honesty demands that one

ought to say "man, man, man"! The heirs of the Greeks and Romans? Of Christianity? All this seems to those cynics to be nothing; but heirs of the world process! Apex and aim of the world process! Meaning and solution of each and every riddle of becoming, as manifest in the modern human being, the ripest fruit on the tree of knowledge!—That's what I call inflated self-aggrandizement! This is the trademark by which the firstborn of all ages can be recognized, regardless of whether they are also simultaneously the lastborn. Never has the view of history soared so high, not even in its own dreams, for now the history of humanity is merely the continuation of the history of animals and plants. Indeed, even in the deepest depths of the ocean the historical universalist discovers the traces of himself in living slime. Looking back with amazement on the miracle of the immense distance that the human being has already traveled, he reels at the sight of that even more amazing miracle, the modern human being himself, who is capable of surveying this immense distance. He stands tall and proud atop the pyramid of the world process; when he lays the capstone of his knowledge at its apex, he appears to be calling out to nature that listens all around him: "We have reached our goal; we are the goal; we are nature perfected."

Overproud European of the nineteenth century, you are *stark raving mad!* Your knowledge does not perfect nature, but only kills your own nature. Just measure the wealth of your knowledge against the poverty of your abilities. Certainly, you climb on the sunbeams of your knowledge up to the heavens, but also down into chaos. Your manner of traveling—namely, climbing as a person of knowledge—is your doom; for you, solid ground crumbles away into uncertainty; your life is no longer supported by pillars, but only by spiderwebs that are torn apart by every new grasp of your knowledge.—But enough of this gloomy seriousness, since it is possible to speak of the matter more cheerfully.

The ravingly unreflective shattering and destruction of all foundations, their disintegration into a fluid, dispersing be-

coming, the tireless unraveling and historicizing by the modern human being—this great spider at the center of the cosmic web—of all that has come into being: all this may occupy and disturb the moralist, the artist, the pious person, and even the statesman, but today, for once, we are going to let it cheer us up by viewing it in the gleaming magic mirror of a *philosophical parodist* in whose head the present age arrives at an ironical self-consciousness of such clarity that it "verges on infamy," to speak in a Goethean fashion. Hegel once taught us that "when Spirit takes a sudden leap, we philosophers are also at hand." Our age made a sudden leap into self-irony, and lo and behold, E. von Hartmann was at hand and had written his *Philosophy of the Unconscious*—or, to put it more clearly, his "Philosophy of Unconscious Irony." I have seldom seen a more humorous invention or read anything so full of philosophical roguishness as this work of Hartmann's; anyone whom it fails to enlighten on the subject of *becoming*—indeed, anyone whom it does not set aright—is truly fit to be called a has-been. The beginning and goal of the world process, from the first startled jolt of consciousness to the point at which it is flung back into nothingness, including the precisely delineated task of our generation in this world process—all of this drawn from the cleverly ingenious inspiration well of the unconscious and bathed in apocalyptically shining light, all of this so deceptively imitated and immersed in such an upstanding seriousness, as though it were in fact a serious philosophy and not merely a philosophical joke—a totality of this sort establishes its creator as one of the first philosophical parodists of all time. Let us thus make sacrifices at his altar; let us sacrifice to him, the inventor of a genuine panacea, a lock of hair—to purloin one of Schleiermacher's expressions of admiration. For what cure could possibly be more effective against the excess of historical cultivation than Hartmann's parody of all world history?

If we wanted to express succinctly what Hartmann proclaims from the smoke-enshrouded tripod of his unconscious irony, then we would say: he proclaims that our age must be exactly

the way it is if humanity is ever to become thoroughly fed up with this existence: a belief with which we heartily agree. That horrifying ossification of our age, that restless rattling of bones —which David Strauss has naively depicted in all its splendid facticity—Hartmann not only justifies on the basis of the past, *ex causis efficientibus*, but also on the basis of the future, *ex causa finali*. This rogue lets the light of the Last Judgment shine upon our age, and seen in this light, it appears that our age is very good—good, that is, for those who wish to suffer as severely as possible from the indigestibility of life and for whom the Last Judgment cannot arrive too soon. To be sure, Hartmann calls the time of life that humanity is now approaching its "age of manhood"; however, according to his description, this is the joyous state in which there is nothing but "solid mediocrity," in which art is the equivalent of "what an evening's farce is, say, to a Berlin stockbroker," and in which "geniuses are no longer necessary, because that would be tantamount to throwing pearls to swine, or even because the age has progressed beyond that stage suited to genius to a more significant stage"—that is, to that stage of social development in which every worker "leads a comfortable existence, due to the fact that his working hours leave him sufficient leisure to attend to his own intellectual education." Rogue of rogues, you are giving voice to the longing of present-day humanity; but you also know just what kind of ghost will appear at the end of humanity's age of manhood as a result of this education to solid mediocrity—nausea. Things are clearly in a very sorry state, but things will get even sorrier, since "the Antichrist is clearly ever extending his sphere of influence"—but it *must* be this way, it *must* come to this, for with all this we are well on our way to experiencing nausea with all of existence. "Therefore, as laborers in the vineyards of the Lord, let us strive vigorously onward, for it is the process alone that can lead to redemption."

The vineyard of the Lord! The process! To redemption! Who does not see and hear in this the historical cultivation that only knows the word "becoming," that intentionally disguises itself

behind a parodistic deformation, that makes the most wanton statements about itself from behind this grotesque mask! For what does this final roguish call to the laborers in the vineyards actually demand of them? In what labor are they supposed to strive vigorously onward? Or, to put the question differently: What is left to do for the historically cultivated person, the fanatic of the process who is swimming and drowning in the flow of becoming, before he can some day harvest that nausea, the precious fruit of that vineyard?—He has to do nothing but go on living as he has always lived, go on loving as he has always loved, go on hating as he has always hated, and go on reading the same newspapers he has always read. For him there is only one sin—to live differently from the way he has always lived. But precisely how he has always lived is described to us with the excessive clarity of letters carved in stone on that celebrated page whose propositions are printed in boldfaced capitals, and over which all of today's fashionably cultivated scum have fallen into blind rapture and rapturous frenzy because they believe they have discovered in these propositions their own justification, a justification bathed, moreover, in apocalyptic light. For the unconscious parodist demanded of each and every individual "the total surrender of his personality to the world process for the sake of its goal, the redemption of the world." Or even brighter and clearer: "The affirmation of the will to life is proclaimed to be the only correct thing for the time being; for only in the total surrender to life and its sorrows, and not in cowardly personal resignation and withdrawal, can something be accomplished for the world process." And: "To strive for individual negation of the will is just as foolish and useless—if not even more foolish—than suicide." And: "The thoughtful reader will understand without further elucidation the shape that a practical philosophy founded on these principles would take, and that such a practical philosophy must necessarily entail a reconciliation with life, not estrangement from it."

The thoughtful reader will understand; but Hartmann could be misunderstood! And how incredibly funny it is that he was

misunderstood! Are Germans of today supposed to be very subtle? A worthy Englishman believes they lack "delicacy of perception"; indeed, he even dares to assert that "in the German mind there does seem to be something splay, something blunt-edged, unhandy and infelicitous." Would the great German parodist contradict this? To be sure, according to his explanation we are approaching "that ideal state in which the human race fashions its own history in full consciousness," but we are obviously still very far away from that perhaps even more ideal state in which humanity reads Hartmann's book in full consciousness. If we ever reach this state, then no human being will ever again let the term "world process" pass his lips without these lips simultaneously smiling, for in doing so he will remember the time in which Hartmann's parodistic Gospel was listened to, sucked in, debated, venerated, disseminated, and canonized with all the gullibility of that "German mind," indeed, with "the exaggerated seriousness of the owl," as Goethe once put it. But the world must move forward; that ideal state cannot be attained by dreaming of it, it must be fought and struggled for, and only cheerfulness can lead to redemption, to redemption from that misleading owlish seriousness. This will be the day when we wisely avoid all constructions of the world process or even of the history of humanity, a time in which we will no longer pay attention to the masses, but once again only to individuals, who form a kind of bridge over the turbulent stream of becoming. Individuals do not further a process, rather they live timelessly and simultaneously, thanks to history, which permits such a combination; they live in the republic of geniuses of which Schopenhauer once spoke. One giant calls to another across the desolate expanses of time, and this lofty dialogue between spirits continues, undisturbed by the wanton, noisy chattering of the dwarfs that crawl about beneath them. The task of history is to be their mediator and thereby continually to incite and lend strength to the production of greatness. No, the goal of humankind cannot possibly be found in its end stage, but only in its highest specimens.

Of course, to this our comedian with that admirable dialectic—a dialectic that is about as genuine as its admirers are admirable—retorts: "It would be just as incompatible with the concept of development to ascribe to the world process an infinite duration in the past, since then every conceivable development would already have to have occurred, and this is definitely not the case" (oh, you scoundrel!), "as it would be to concede to the process an infinite duration in the future. Both would annul the concept of development toward a goal" (oh, double scoundrel!) "and would make the world process appear similar to the Danaides' futile attempts to draw water. However, the complete victory of the logical over the illogical" (oh, scoundrel of scoundrels) "must coincide with the temporal end of the world process, with the Last Judgment." No, you clear and mocking spirit, as long as the illogical prevails as it does today, as long, for instance, as it is still possible to speak, as you do, of the "world process" and still elicit general approval, the Last Judgment is still far away: for it is still all too cheerful on this earth, some illusions still blossom, as, for example, the illusion your contemporaries have of you; we are not yet ripe for being flung back into your nothingness. For we believe that it is going to get even funnier when people finally start to understand you, you misunderstood man of the unconscious. However, if despite this we should be overcome by a violent spell of nausea, much like the sort that you prophesied to your readers, if your depiction of your present and future should prove to be correct—and no one has ever scorned these two, scorned them with as much disgust as you—then I would be happy to cast a vote with the majority, in precisely the way you propose, for the demise of your world next Saturday evening at twelve o'clock sharp. And our decree will close with the words: "As of tomorrow, time will cease to exist and no newspapers will appear." But perhaps our decree will be in vain and will have no effect: well, in any event we will then have enough time to perform a nice experiment. Let us take a balance and place Hartmann's unconscious on one of the scales, and Hartmann's

world process on the other. There are people who believe that they will have precisely the same weight, for each contains an equally bad phrase and an equally good joke.—If Hartmann's joke is ever understood, then Hartmann's phrase "world process" will never again be used except in jest. In fact, the time is long overdue to protest with all the might that satirical malice can muster against the aberrations of the historical sensibility, against the excessive joy in the process at the price of being and life, against the senseless displacement of all perspectives; and the author of the *Philosophy of the Unconscious* should continually be proud that he was the first to succeed in clearly recognizing the ridiculousness of the notion of the world process, and, thanks to the uncommon seriousness of his portrayal, in helping us recognize this ridiculousness with even greater clarity. For the time being we need not be bothered with why the "world" exists, why "humanity" exists, unless we want to crack a joke, for the impudence of the tiny human worm is simply the most comical, amusing thing ever to play on the world stage. But just ask yourself why you, as an individual, exist; and if no one can tell you, then just try to justify the meaning of your existence *a posteriori*, as it were, by setting yourself a purpose, a goal, a "reason why," a lofty and noble "reason why." Go ahead and perish in the attempt—I know of no better purpose in life than perishing in the attempt to accomplish something great and impossible, *animae magnae prodigus*. If, by contrast, the doctrines of sovereign becoming, of the fluidity of all concepts, types, and species, of the lack of any cardinal difference between human and animal—doctrines I hold to be true, but also deadly—are flung at the people for one more generation in the craze for education, then no one should be surprised if that people perishes of petty egoism and wretchedness, of ossification and selfishness, after first falling apart and ceasing to be a people at all. It will then perhaps be replaced in the arena of the future by systems of individual egoisms, brotherhoods whose purpose will be the rapacious exploitation of the nonbrothers, and similar products of utilitarian vulgarity. In order to pave

the way for these creations we only need continue to write history from the standpoint of the *masses* and scrutinize history for those laws that can be derived from the necessities of these masses, that is, for those laws that govern the movement of society's lower strata, its loam and clay. Only in three respects does it seem to me that the masses are deserving of notice: first, as faded copies of great men printed on poor paper with wornout plates; second, as resistance to the great; and finally, as tools of the great. With regard to everything else, they can go to the devil and to statistics! What? Can statistics prove that there are laws in history? Laws? Yes, it proves how vulgar and disgustingly uniform the masses are. Should we apply the word "laws" to those effects derived from the forces of stupidity, imitation, love, and hunger? All right, we are ready to concede this, but then the corollary proposition also holds, namely, that to the extent that there are laws in history, these laws are worthless and hence history itself is worthless. But precisely that form of history is now generally valued that takes the great drives of the masses to be what is important and paramount in history, and that views all great men merely as their clearest expression, as if they were bubbles that become visible on the surface of the flood. According to this, the masses are supposed to produce greatness out of themselves; order, in short, is supposed to be produced out of chaos. In the end, of course, the hymn to the great productive masses is sung. Then everything is called "great" that has moved these masses for a longer period of time and thus has been, as they say, "a historical power." But isn't this tantamount to intentionally confusing quantity and quality? If the coarse masses have found any thought whatsoever—for example, a religious thought—to be entirely adequate, have bitterly defended it, and dragged it along with them for centuries, then and only then is the discoverer and founder of this thought supposed to be great. But why!? What is noblest and loftiest has no effect at all on the masses; the historical success of Christianity, its historical power, tenacity, and longevity, none of this, fortunately, testifies to the great-

ness of its founder, since it basically would testify against him. But between him and that historical success there lies a very worldly and obscure layer of passion, error, greed for power and honor, of the enduringly effective impact of the *imperium romanum*, a layer from which Christianity acquired that worldly taste and worldly residue that made possible its continued survival in the world and gave it, as it were, its endurance. Greatness ought not to depend upon success, and Demosthenes possessed greatness even though he never had success. The purest and most sincere adherents of Christianity have always tended to question and impede, rather than to promote, its worldly success, its so-called "historical power," for they were accustomed to placing themselves outside "the world," and they paid no attention to the "process of the Christian idea." This explains why they have for the most part remained unknown to and unnamed by history. Expressed in Christian terms: The devil is the ruler of the world, and hence the lord of success and progress; he is the true power at work in all historical powers, and this is how things will essentially remain—despite the fact that this may ring quite painfully in the ears of an age that is accustomed to deifying success and historical power. In fact, it was precisely here that this age learned how to give things new names, and it even went so far as to rechristen the devil himself. It is certainly the hour of a great danger: human beings seem to be close to discovering that the egoism of individuals, of groups, or of the masses was in all ages the lever behind historical movements, but at the same time they are by no means troubled by this discovery; instead, they decree: "Egoism shall be our God." Armed with this new belief, they set with unmistakable intent about the task of erecting future history upon egoism; only it is supposed to be a prudent egoism, one that submits to some limitations so that it can establish itself permanently, one that studies history precisely so that it will become acquainted with imprudent egoism. From this study one has learned that the state has a very special mission in the world system of egoism that is to be founded: it is supposed to become

the patron of all prudent egoisms in order to protect them with the might of its military and police forces from the horrible eruptions of imprudent egoism. It is with this same purpose in mind that history—in particular the history of animals and human beings—has been carefully indoctrinated into the dangerous—because imprudent—masses and the working classes, since it is known that a single grain of historical cultivation is capable of breaking coarse and dull instincts and desires, or at least of channeling them in the direction of refined egoism. In sum: The human being is now concerned, in the words of E. von Hartmann, "with a practical, comfortable accommodation in his worldly home, one that looks out thoughtfully toward the future." The same writer calls such a period the "manhood of humanity," and he thereby ridicules what today is called a "man," as though this concept referred solely to the sober egocentric, just as he likewise prophesies that this manhood will be followed by its corresponding old age, thereby clearly venting his sarcasm on those old men who are typical of our time. For he speaks of the mature introspection with which they survey "all the stormy, dissolute sufferings of their past lives and grasp the vanity of what they had once supposed to be the goal of all their striving." No, that cunning and historically cultivated egoism's age of manhood is followed by a period of old age that clutches without dignity and with disgusting greediness to life, and then comes a final act in which the

> Last scene of all,
> That ends this strange eventful history,
> Is second childishness and mere oblivion,
> Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything.

Regardless of whether the dangers threatening our life and our culture come from these dissolute toothless and tasteless old men or from Hartmann's so-called "men," in defiance of both we want to hold on with our teeth to the rights of our *youth* and will never tire of defending our youth against those iconoclasts who would destroy the images of the future. However,

in this struggle we are forced to make an especially painful observation: *that the aberrations of the historical sensibility from which the present suffers are deliberately promoted, encouraged, and—utilized.*

But they are utilized against youth so as to make it fit the mold of that mature manhood of egoism to which the whole world aspires; they are utilized so as to overcome youth's natural aversion to that manly-unmanly egoism by transfiguring it so that it appears in a magically scientific light. It is well known—indeed, too well known—what a certain excess of history is capable of: namely, of uprooting the strongest instincts of youth, its fire, defiance, self-oblivion, and love; of smothering the ardor of its passion for justice; of repressing or suppressing its desire to mature slowly by supplanting it with the opposite desire to be quickly finished, quickly useful, and quickly productive; of infecting youth's honesty and boldness of feeling with doubt. Indeed, it is even capable of cheating youth out of its most beautiful privilege, out of the power to plant, overflowing with faith, a great thought within itself and letting it grow into an even greater thought. A certain excess of history is capable of doing all of this, as we have seen, and it accomplishes this by constantly shifting the human being's horizons and perspectives, by removing the atmosphere that envelops him, thereby preventing him from feeling and acting *ahistorically*. He then retreats from an infinite horizon into himself, into the tiniest egoistical realm, and is doomed to wither there and dry up. It is probable that he will attain cleverness, but he will never attain wisdom. He compromises, calculates, and accommodates himself to the facts; he does not seethe, but merely blinks and knows how to seek his own or his party's advantage in the advantage or disadvantage of others; he unlearns superfluous shame and thereby arrives successively at the stages of Hartmann's "man" and "old man." But that is what he is *supposed to* become, precisely this is the meaning of that "total surrender of personality to the world process" that is so cynically demanded today—for the sake of his goal, the redemption of the world, as E. von Hartmann assures us. Now,

the will and the goal of Hartmann's "men" and "old men" is hardly world redemption, but certainly the world would be even more redeemed if it were redeemed of these men and old men. For then the kingdom of youth would be at hand.—

10

Thinking of *youth* at this point, I call out "Land ho!, Land ho!" Enough, more than enough, of this passionately seeking but fruitless voyage on strange, dark seas! Now, at least, we see a shore: regardless of what it is like, this is where we must land, and even the poorest haven is better than being swept back into this infinite hopelessness and skepticism. Our first task is to make land; later on we will find the good harbors and make landing easier for those who follow us.

This voyage was dangerous and exciting. How far we now are from the calm contemplation with which we first watched our ship set out to sea. Going out in search of the dangers of history, we found ourselves exposed to all of them in the most acute manner; we ourselves bear the marks of those sufferings that afflict human beings of the modern age as a consequence of an excess of history, and this very treatise exhibits, as I freely admit, in the immoderation of its criticism, in the immaturity of its humaneness, in its frequent shifts from irony to cynicism, from pride to skepticism, its thoroughly modern character, the character of the weak personality. And yet I still have faith in the inspirational power that, in lieu of genius, has guided my vessel; I have faith in *youth*, and I have faith that it has steered me correctly by forcing me into a position of *protest against the historical education of the modern human being in his youth*, and by forcing this protester to demand that human beings above all learn to live and to employ history only *in the service of the life they have learned to live*. It is necessary to be young in order to understand this protest; indeed, given the premature grayness of our youth today, one can scarcely be young enough and still be able to sense exactly what I am protesting against. Let me turn to an example for help. It has been little over a century since a

natural instinct for what is called poetry awoke in some of the young people in Germany. Are we to suppose that prior generations and even their own contemporaries never spoke at all about that art that was inwardly alien and unnatural to them? We know the opposite to be true, namely, that they reflected, wrote, and argued about "poetry" with all the energy at their disposal, producing words about words about words about words. That incipient awakening of the word to life did not immediately spell the death of these word producers; in a certain sense they live on yet today. For if it is true, as Gibbon claims, that the demise of a world takes nothing but time, albeit a great deal of time, then it will take nothing but time, albeit even a great deal more time, for a false notion to perish in Germany, the "land of the gradual." And yet: Today there are perhaps a hundred more people than there were a hundred years ago who know what poetry is; perhaps a hundred years from now there will be a hundred more who meanwhile will also have learned what culture is, and will have learned that the Germans, no matter how much they might speak of it and flaunt it, to this day simply have had no culture. In their eyes, the general satisfaction of the Germans with their "cultivation" will appear just as unbelievable and foolish as Gottsched's once widely acknowledged classicism or Ramler's status as the German Pindar now seem to us. They will perhaps conclude that this cultivation is a kind of knowledge about cultivation, and a false and superficial knowledge, at that. False and superficial because the Germans tolerated the contradiction between life and knowledge, because they utterly failed to perceive what was characteristic about the cultivation of truly cultured nations: that culture can only grow and flourish out of life, whereas in the case of the Germans it is always pinned on like an artificial flower or put on like a sugarcoating, and for that reason can never be anything but mendacious and unfruitful. But the education of German youth proceeds from precisely this false and unfruitful concept of culture; its aim, conceived purely and loftily, is by no means the independent cultivated person, but rather the

scholar, the scientifically oriented person, a person, moreover, who is useful at the earliest possible age and places himself outside life in order to recognize it more clearly. Its result, when viewed in a vulgar empirical manner, is the historically and aesthetically cultivated philistine, the quickly dated up-to-date babbler about the state, the church, and art, the *sensorium* for a thousand secondhand sensations, an insatiable stomach that does not even know the meaning of genuine hunger and thirst. That an education with that aim and with this result is unnatural can only be sensed by those who have not yet been fully shaped by it; only the instincts of youth can sense this, because youth still possesses the instincts of nature that are artificially and violently broken by that education. However, anyone who, in turn, seeks to break this education must help youth express itself, must help illuminate, with the lucidity of concepts, the path of their unconscious resistance against this education and transform it into an aware and outspoken consciousness. But how can such an unusual goal be achieved?—

Above all by destroying one superstition, the belief in the *necessity* of this type of education. It is still commonly believed that there is no alternative to our present, extremely distressing reality. With this question in mind, we need only examine the literature on secondary and higher education that has appeared over the past few decades: we will discover to our dismay just how uniformly the entire aim of education has been conceived, despite the great divergence of opinions and the vehemence of the controversies; we will discover just how unswervingly the previous product of education, the "cultivated human being" as he is conceived today, is accepted as the necessary and rational foundation of all further education. This is more or less the substance of that monotonous educational canon: the young person must begin with knowledge about cultivation, not with knowledge about life, and even less so with life and experience themselves. Moreover, this knowledge about cultivation is instilled or inculcated in the youth in the form of historical knowledge; that means that his head is jammed with

an enormous number of concepts that are derived not from the immediate perception of life, but from the extraordinarily mediate acquaintance with past ages and peoples. Any desire to experience something for himself and to sense how his own experiences grow inside him into an integrated and organic system is numbed and, as it were, intoxicated by the illusory promise that in the span of a few short years it will be possible to collect in himself the highest and most remarkable experiences of older ages, especially the greatest of these. It is exactly the same insane method that drives our young painters into the art museums and galleries instead of into the workshop of a master, and above all into the singular workshop of the singular master, nature. It is as though on a fleeting stroll through history we could pick up the skills and artistry of the past, the actual fruits of past lives; indeed, as though life itself were not a craft that has constantly to be learned from the ground up and relentlessly practiced if it is supposed to produce anything but bunglers and babblers! —

Plato thought it necessary that the first generation of his new society (in the perfect state) be educated with the aid of a powerful *necessary lie*; children should learn to believe that they had all lived for some time in a dream state beneath the earth, where they were shaped and formed by the demiurge of nature. It would be impossible to rebel against this past! It would be impossible to oppose the work of the gods! It was to be regarded as an inviolable law of nature: those born to be philosophers have bodies of gold; those born to be guardians, bodies only of silver; and those born to be laborers, bodies of iron and bronze. Just as it is not possible to mix these metals, Plato asserts, so should it not be possible ever to intermix or overturn these caste divisions; the belief in the *aeterna veritas* of this order is the foundation of the new form of education and therewith of the new state. — The modern German now has the same belief in the *aeterna veritas* of his education, of his type of culture; and yet this belief would collapse, just as the Platonic state would have collapsed, if its necessary lie were ever con-

fronted with a *necessary truth*: that the German has no culture for the simple reason that his education makes it impossible for him to have one. He seeks to have the flower without the roots and stem; he therefore seeks it in vain. That is a simple truth, an unpleasant and crude, but genuinely necessary truth.

But *our first generation* must be educated in this necessary truth; it will certainly suffer the most under it, for it has to educate itself—educate itself, moreover, against itself—by means of this necessary truth in order to acquire new habits and a new nature and leave its old habits and its first nature behind. Thus it could address itself with the classical Spanish phrase *Defienda me Dios de my,* Lord protect me from myself, that is, from that nature acquired through my upbringing. It must sip this truth drop by drop, sip it like a bitter yet powerful medicine, and every individual of this generation must overcome himself in order to pass judgment on himself, something that would be easier to endure in the form of a general judgment on the entire age. "We have no cultivation; what is worse, we are ruined and incapable of living, of correct and simple seeing and hearing, of happily seizing what is nearest and natural; and to date we do not even possess the foundation of a culture, because we ourselves are not convinced that there is a true life within us. Fragmented and disintegrated, our totality half-mechanically divided into an interior and an exterior, littered with concepts as with dragon's teeth, producing concept dragons; suffering, furthermore, from the sickness of words and mistrustful of every individual feeling that does not yet bear the stamp of words: as such a nonliving and yet incredibly active factory of concepts and words, I perhaps am still justified in saying *cogito, ergo sum*, but not *vivo, ergo cogito.* I am granted empty 'being,' but not full, green 'life'; my original feeling only vouches for the fact that I am a thinking, but not a living creature, that I am no *animal*, but at the very most a *cogital.* First grant me life, and then I will create a culture from it!"—This is what the individual of this first generation cries out, and all

these individuals will recognize one another by this call. Who will grant them this life?

No god and no human being: only their own *youth*. Unshackle this youth and with it you will have liberated life. For it merely lay hidden, in prison, it has not yet withered and died out—just ask yourselves!

But it is sick, this unshackled life, and must be cured. It is sick with many ills and does not merely suffer from the memory of its chains; it suffers—and this is of special concern to us—from the *historical sickness*. The excess of history has attacked the shaping power of life, it no longer understands how to utilize the past as a powerful nourishment. This illness is horrible, but nevertheless! If youth did not possess the prophetic gift of nature, then no one would even know that it is an illness and that a paradise of health has been lost. However, this same youth divines with the healing instinct of this same nature how paradise is to be regained; it is acquainted with the balms and remedies effective against the historical sickness, against the excess of history. What are the names of these remedies?

Well, don't be surprised to find out that they are the names of poisons: the antidotes to the historical are—*the ahistorical and the suprahistorical*. With these names we return to the beginning of our observations and to its calm tenor.

With the term "the ahistorical" I designate the art and power to be able to *forget* and to enclose oneself in a limited *horizon*; I term "suprahistorical" those powers that divert one's gaze from what is in the process of becoming to what lends existence the character of something eternal and stable in meaning, to *art* and *religion*. *Science*—for it is science that here would speak of "poisons"—views in this strength, in these powers, antagonistic powers and strengths, for it considers the mere observation of things to be true and correct, that is, to be scientific observation, which everywhere perceives only what has already become something, something historical, and nowhere does it perceive something being, something eternal. Science lives in

an internal contradiction with the eternalizing powers of art and religion, just as it hates oblivion, the death of knowledge; it seeks to suspend all the limitations placed on horizons and to catapult the human being into an infinite, unlimited light-wave sea of known becoming.

If only he could live in it! Just as in an earthquake cities collapse and are destroyed and human beings build their houses but fearfully and fleetingly on volcanic ground, so life caves in on itself and becomes feeble and discouraged when the *concept-quake* unleashed by science robs the human being of the foundation for all his security and tranquillity, his belief in what is lasting and eternal. Should life rule over knowledge and science, or should knowledge rule over life? Which of these forces is higher and more decisive? No one will doubt: life is the higher, the ruling force; for any knowledge that destroyed life would simultaneously destroy itself. Knowledge presupposes life; hence it has the same interest in the preservation of life that every creature has in its own continued existence. This is the reason why science needs the supervision and surveillance of a higher power; a *hygiene of life* occupies a place close by the side of science; and one proposition of this hygiene would be: the ahistorical and the suprahistorical are the natural antidotes to the stifling of life by the historical, to the historical sickness. It is likely that we, the historically sick, will also have to suffer from these antidotes. But the fact that we suffer from them provides no evidence that could call the correctness of the chosen therapy into question.

And it is in this that I recognize the mission of that *youth* of which I have spoken, of that first generation of fighters and dragon slayers who will advance a happier, more beautiful cultivation and humanness, without themselves ever having more than a promising inkling of this future happiness and coming beauty. This youth will suffer simultaneously from the illness and the cure, but despite this they believe that they can boast better health and even a more natural nature than the generations that preceded them, the cultivated "men" and "old men"

of the present. But it is their mission to shatter the conceptions that this present age has of "health" and "cultivation," and to arouse scorn and hatred against these monstrous conceptual hybrids. And the symptom that will vouch for their greater health will be that this youth will be able to use no concepts, no party slogans from among the verbal and conceptual coins that are currently in circulation, to designate their own being. Rather, their conviction will derive only from a power active within them that struggles, discriminates, and analyzes, and from a feeling for life that is constantly heightened in every good hour. Some may disagree with the claim that this youth will already have cultivation—but what youth would consider this a reproach? We may accuse them of being crude and intemperate—but they are not yet old and wise enough to moderate their demands. But above all, they do not need either to feign or defend a ready-made cultivation, and they enjoy all the consolations and privileges of youth, especially the privilege of courageous, unreflected honesty, and the inspiring consolation of hope.

I know that these hopeful individuals have a concrete understanding of these generalizations and will translate them by means of their own experience into a doctrine that is personally meaningful. In the meantime, others may perceive nothing but covered dishes that could possibly even be empty, until one day they are surprised to see with their own eyes that these dishes are full and that assaults, demands, life drives, and passions that could not remain concealed for very long are packed into and compressed within these same generalizations. Calling the attention of these skeptics to time, which brings everything to light, I will conclude by turning to that society of hopeful individuals, in order to relate to them by means of a parable the course and progress of their cure, their redemption from the historical sickness, and hence their own personal history up to that point at which they will once again be healthy enough to pursue history anew and to make use of the past in the service of life in the sense of the three historical modes described

above, namely, the monumental, the antiquarian, and the critical. At that moment they will be less knowledgeable than the "cultivated people" of the present, for they will have forgotten much of what they learned and will even have lost all desire to attend at all to the things that those cultivated persons want to know. Seen from the perspective of these cultivated persons, their distinguishing marks are precisely their "lack of cultivation," their indifference and reserve with regard to many things that are otherwise celebrated, even with regard to many things that are good. But when they have arrived at the conclusion of their cure, they have once again become *human beings* and have ceased to be humanlike aggregates—that's quite an accomplishment! There is still hope. Don't your hearts rejoice at this, you hopeful individuals?

"And how will we arrive at this goal?," you will ask. At the very beginning of your journey to that goal the God of Delphi will call out to you his imperative, "Know thyself." It is a difficult imperative, for this God, as Heraclitus has said, "neither conceals nor reveals, but merely alludes." What does he allude to?

There were centuries in which the Greeks found themselves threatened by a danger similar to the one we face today, the danger, namely, of perishing in a flood of things alien and past, of perishing of "history." They never lived in proud isolation; on the contrary, their "cultivation" was for many years a chaos of foreign—Semitic, Babylonian, Lydian, and Egyptian—forms and concepts, and their religion represented a veritable struggle among the gods of the entire Orient. This is similar to the manner in which today "German cultivation" and religion represent an internally struggling chaos of all foreign lands and all prior history. But despite this, and thanks to that Apollonian imperative, Hellenic culture did not become an aggregate. The Greeks gradually learned how *to organize this chaos* by concentrating—in accordance with this Delphic doctrine—on themselves, that is, on their genuine needs, and by letting those pseudoneeds die out. They thereby took posses-

sion of themselves again; they did not long remain the glutted heirs and epigones of the entire Orient; based on the practical interpretation of Apollo's imperative, they themselves became, after a difficult struggle with themselves, the happiest enrichers and increasers of that inherited treasure; they became the first cultured people, and hence the model for all future cultured peoples.

This is a parable for every individual among us: he must organize the chaos within him by concentrating on his genuine needs. His honesty, his sound and truthful character, must at some point rebel against the constant imitation—imitation of speech and imitation of learning—that he finds everywhere around him. He then will begin to grasp that culture can be something other than the *decoration of life*—that is, at bottom always only mere dissimulation and disguise, for all ornaments have the purpose of concealing what they adorn. In this way the Greek concept of culture—as opposed to the Roman—will be disclosed to him, the concept of culture as a new and improved *physis*, without interior and exterior, without dissimulation and convention, a concept of culture as the harmony of life, thought, appearance, and will. He thus will learn from his own experience that it was the higher power of *moral* nature that made the Greeks' victory over other cultures possible, and that every increase in truthfulness is always a necessary step toward the furthering of *true* cultivation—even though this truthfulness may sometimes do serious harm to that cultivatedness that is held in esteem at the time, even though it may hasten the downfall of an entire decorative culture.

Second Piece On the Utility and Liability of History for Life

In addition to the preliminary draft (*Pd*), the second draft (*Sd*), the printer's manuscript (*Pm*), and the page proofs (*Pp*) of "Utility and Liability of History," a copy of the published text found in Nietzsche's library contains subsequent emendations (*Se*) dating most likely from the year 1886.

Early versions of some sections of "Utility and Liability of History" can be found in the unpublished fragments from summer 1873 to winter 1874, published in Vol. II of this edition. In the notes, references to these fragments are cited by the number of the notebook followed by the fragment number in brackets.

FOREWORD

85,3 *activity."]* From a letter by Goethe to Schiller, dated 19 Dec. 1798.

85,4 *ceterum censeo]* "but I am of the opinion": An allusion to the famous sentence with which the elder Cato is purported to have closed every speech before the Roman Senate: "Ceterum censeo Carthaginem esse delendam" ("But I am of the opinion that Carthage must be destroyed").

85,10 *hatred... that]* *Se*: *hatred*: why? Because

85,15–16 *crude... afflictions.]* *Se*: more uncouth wishes.

85,17 *easy]* *Se*: enjoyable

85,17–18 *action... base]* *Se*: action, let alone for the whitewashing of an exhausted life, and of petty and cowardly

85,21–23 *a phenomenon... age.]* *Pm*: just as we can study this phenomenon quite completely but also quite painfully in the striking symptoms of our age.

85,26–86,10 *Perhaps... Germans.]* *Se*: What will I receive in return for this? I have no doubt that people will answer: Nothing is more perverse, cheaper, and more illicit than this feeling of mine—by feeling it, I prove myself unworthy of that powerful movement in favor of history, of that historical sensibility that, as something new in history, has only made itself evident in Europe for two generations and in Germany for four.

86, 16 *age.]* *Sd*: age. [Moreover: who would walk with a whip through a valley known for its echo without cracking it a few times just so that he might hear that beautiful echo? Anyone who wants to get to know his age should give it cause to speak—by dealing with it candidly.]

86, 17–23 *The observations... it.]* *Se*: Now, it is precisely this that is the *unfashionable* aspect of my mode of observation. I attempt to understand something in which our century justifiably takes pride, ⟨its⟩ historical cultivation, as a detriment, an infirmity, a deficiency of the century, because I go so far as to believe that it suffers from this as from its most serious illness and should at least recognize *that* it suffers from it.

86, 23 *Goethe]* For the passage Nietzsche is alluding to, see Goethe, *Dichtung und Wahrheit* (Poetry and truth), bk. III, chap. 13.

86, 23–29 *But... up.]* *added in Se without indication of where it should be inserted*: I wish to convince my readers [to recognize] to come to recognize [in] under this historical cultivation [the most dangerous] a dangerous illness of this century. By doing so I am not attempting something that flies in the face of reason. Goethe—and this is the only thing that I want to prove: that with our "historical sensibility" we *have cultivated our own faults*.

I

87, 6 *1]* For earlier versions of the opening paragraphs, cf. 29 [98]; 30 [2].

87, 7 *Observe... you:]* *Se*: This herd that grazes past me:

87, 11–12 *thus... bored.]* *Se*: *thus* happy, neither melancholy nor bored.

87, 13–18 *boasts... human being]* *Se*: would like to boast about the superiority of his humanity over animals and yet looks enviously upon their happiness. He

87, 19–20 *"Why... happiness?"]* *Se*: "Why don't you tell me about your happiness? Why do you [only] remain silent and just look at me like that?"

87, 20–23 *The animal... wonder.]* *Se*: And the animal also wanted to answer, "Because I always immediately forget what I want to

say"—but it had already forgotten this answer and hence said nothing, so that the human being was left to wonder anew.

87, 28–29 *does...of a] Se*: does repeatedly return, this ghost disturbs the peace of every

87, 33 *envies] Pm*: marvels at *Sd*: [envies] marvels at

87, 33–88, 4 *that immediately...honest.] Se*: for being able to forget and for truly "killing" time. The animal lives *ahistorically*: it disappears entirely into the present, like a number that leaves no remainder.

88, 6–7 *weighs...over,] Deleted in Se.*

88, 8 *he can...that] Deleted in Se.*

88, 12 *in blissful blindness] Se*: blind and blissful

88, 15–16 *will...obliviousness.] Se*: awakens from its obliviousness.

88, 19 *imperfect] Se*: "imperfect" Nietzsche's word, *Imperfectum*, not only evokes the notion of imperfection but also signifies the imperfect tense in grammar, commonly called the simple past. Thus the pun on this word—which Nietzsche stresses when in his subsequent emendation he places it in quotation marks—suggests that imperfection inheres by nature in the sense of pastness.

88, 19–24 *When...itself.] Deleted in Se.*

88, 25–29 *is in...living] Se*: is supposed to be what binds the living to life, then indeed no philosopher would be closer to truth than is the cynic, for the happiness of the animal, who is, after all, the consummate cynic, is the

88, 30–34 *is uninterruptedly...privation.] Se*: comes again and again, is an incomparably greater form of happiness than the greatest happiness that only occurs as an exception and a mood, in the midst of sheer joylessness, yearning, and privation, and for precisely that reason increases the painfulness a hundredfold.

89, 2–16 *Anyone...well.] Se*: Forgetting is necessary for all action. *Appended to this the rejected beginning of a partial revision*: Let's imagine the most extreme instance: this would be a human being who is condemned to see eternal becoming and nothing but eternal becoming.

89, 13 *Heraclitus]* Heraclitus defended the doctrine that all of existence is in a constant state of flux. In his metaphor of the stream

of becoming, Nietzsche alludes to Heraclitus's famous assertion that one cannot place one's foot into the same stream twice.

89, 16–19 *A human...rumination.]* Cf. 29 [32].

89, 18–23 *forced...simply:]* *Se*: who principally went without sleep, or like an animal that no longer wanted to eat but only to ruminate. It is possible to live almost without memory, indeed, to live happily, as the animal shows us; but it is utterly impossible to live without forgetting. Or, to return to the problem I am dealing with, a problem of health, as we will see:

89, 24–25 *and...whether]* *Se*: all living things, whether

89, 25 *things,]* *Continuation in Pd*: things. Shaping power. Memory and forgetting are both necessary for health, both for the health of a people, of a culture.

90, 13 *blood.]* *Pp*: blood, in order to suck it in as blood.

91, 22 *ahistorical]* *Pp*: suppressed

92, 18 *in Goethe's words]* See Goethe, *Maximen und Reflexionen* (Maxims and reflections), no. 251: "The person who acts is always without a conscience; no one except the observer has a conscience."

92, 25 *their worth...great.]* *Pp*: there were no honor that would be able to do justice to them.

93, 5 *form."]* The source of this quotation from Barthold Georg Niebuhr is unknown.

93, 23 *give.]* Nietzsche cites this quotation in the original English. The passage is drawn from Hume's *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, Part 10, but is not, in fact, by Hume himself; rather, it is cited by Hume from John Dryden's play *Aureng-Zebe*, act 4, scene 1. Cf. 29 [86]; 30 [2].

94, 32 *yourself.]* Both Nietzsche and Schopenhauer admired the work of Leopardi. The lines Nietzsche quotes are drawn from the poem "A se stesso" (To himself).

94, 33–95, 10 *But...wisdom.]* Cf. 30 [2].

95, 9 *unwisdom]* *Pm*: unknowledge

95, 15 *reduced to an intellectual phenomenon]* *Se*: translated back into an intellectual problem

95, 16 *he understands]* *Se*: he resolves

95, 22 *lives.]* *Pd*: lives. [But only because he is not guided by

knowledge, but rather by the urges of life; only by means of an antidecorative orientation to the past does he learn———]

95, 32 *neither could nor should]* *Se*: could not

2

96, 18 *as Goethe observed]* See Goethe's *Gespräche mit Eckermann* (Conversations with Eckermann), entry dated 21 July 1827.

96, 20 *Polybius]* Nietzsche is referring to a passage from Polybius' *Histories*, I.1.2.

97, 8–10 *was... substance]* *Pm*: once existed to spread the concept of "the human being" into more beautiful and loftier domains

97, 14–17 *of such... history.]* *Pd*: of a past age is also great and that the presaging belief of the desire for fame will be fulfilled, that is the fundamental idea of *culture*.

98, 18 *Schopenhauer]* See chap. 4 of the "Aphorismen zur Lebensweisheit" (Aphorisms for worldly wisdom) in vol. 1 of Schopenhauer's *Parerga und Paralipomena*, entitled "Von Dem, was Einer vorstellt" (About that which one imagines).

99, 6–14 *Basically... America.]* Cf. 29 [108]; 29 [29].

99, 12 *Stoic... Caesar]* Cf. 29 [61]. The allusion is to the conspiracy between Gaius Cassius and Marcus Brutus to assassinate Julius Caesar.

99, 14 *America.]* *Pp*: America, and America Columbus.

100, 18 *golden hip]* For the story of Pythagoras's golden hip, see Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of the Eminent Philosophers*, 8.11.

100, 20 *master.]* *Pp*: master while he was bathing.

3

102, 27–34 *Second... life.]* Cf. 29 [114].

102, 34–35 *ancestral household effects]* An allusion to Goethe's *Faust*, pt. I, l. 408.

103, 26 *soul."]* Nietzsche is referring to Goethe's essay "Von deutscher Baukunst" (On German architecture), written in Strasbourg in 1772 and dedicated to the builder of the Strasbourg cathedral, Erwin von Steinach. In this essay Goethe celebrates the Strasbourg cathedral as a true work of German genius.

103, 29–30 *Burckhardt]* Jacob Burckhardt was a respected colleague of Nietzsche's at the University of Basel. Here Nietzsche is quoting Burckhardt's *Die Kunst der Renaissance in Italien* (The civilization of Renaissance Italy), 2nd ed. (Leipzig, 1869), 200.

105, 9–14 *This... rejected.]* Cf. 29 [114].

105, 23–24 *death... commonly] Pm*: death to the benefit of the roots —and thereby the roots, in turn, are most certain to

106, 13 *gives rise to] Pm*: becomes

106, 31 *violence] Pm*: guilt

107, 4 *being."]* See Goethe's *Faust*, pt. I, ll. 1339–41.

4

108, 9 *4]* Cf. 29 [118, 121, 122, 65, 81].

108, 19 *purpose.] Pm*: life. *Pd*: purpose.

109, 14 *fiat veritas pereat vita]* "Let there be truth, though life may perish."

109, 30 *fairy tale]* See the tale "Der Wolf und die sieben Geislein" (The wolf and the seven little goats) in the Grimms' *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* (Fairy tales).

110, 15–16 *that snake] Pm*: the boa

111, 9 *Barbarians."] deleted continuation in Sd*: Indeed, we can go even further and say the antithesis between "cultivated" and "uncultivated" emerged on the basis of historical studies. But what has the creative intellect—for whom, after all, world history, if it is to have any meaning, must be intended—lost, irretrievably lost by being forced between these antitheses! It is impossible to express! He has lost the reliance on his people because he knows that their feelings are painted over and counterfeited. Even if this feeling has become more refined and more sublime in a small segment of the people, that is no compensation for him, for then he only speaks, as it were, to a sect, and does not sense himself to be needed by his people. Perhaps he will prefer to bury his treasure because he feels disgust at being pretentiously patronized by a sect while his heart is full of compassion for all. The instinct of his people no longer embraces him: for that antithesis has confused and led astray all instincts.

111, 27–28 *the unity... people]* Nietzsche is alluding to a comment

he himself made in the first of the *Unfashionable Observations*; see section 1 of the Strauss essay.

114, 2 *moderns."]* Nietzsche is loosely quoting the words of Franz Grillparzer; see Grillparzer's *Sämmtliche Werke* (Stuttgart, 1872), 9: 187.

114, 19–20 *cultivated... ill-cultivated]* Nietzsche is playing on the common stem of the words *Gebildete* and *verbildet*; I have tried to render this by translating *verbildet*, which means either "deformed" or, in the context of education, "ill-trained," as "ill-cultivated."

114, 21–22 *How... endure]* *Pp*: What has he lost

114, 27 *more refined]* *Pm*: freer

5

115, 22 *5]* Cf. 29 [130].

116, 29 *Schiller]* Nietzsche is alluding to Schiller's poem "Die Worte des Glaubens" (The words of faith).

117, 9–11 *If... shadows:]* *Pd*: The contact with so many past individuals has nearly made human beings into pure abstractions and shadows:

118, 3 *history stories]* Nietzsche's word *Geschichten*, the plural form of *Geschichte*, means both "histories" and "stories." I have chosen to render this ambiguity as "history stories," since it retains both the equivocation of the German and the sarcastic implication that history has been reduced to nothing but stories.

119, 12 *well."]* See section 1 of Goethe's essay "Shakespeare und kein Ende" (Shakespeare without end).

119, 22–23 *historically cultivated products of cultivation]* Nietzsche's neologism, *Bildungsgebilde*, borders on tautology since both components of the word, *Bildung* (cultivation; formation) and *Gebilde* (product), derive from the verb *bilden* (to form, shape, or cultivate). The chosen English phrase reproduces this tautology, without being able to reproduce Nietzsche's ironic play on the concept of *Bildung* that is so central to his argument.

119, 24 *image]* Here, too, Nietzsche's word, *Bild*, echoes the concept of *Bildung*.

120, 2–4 *corpora... vilia... corpora]* Nietzsche is playing ironically

on the Latin word *corpus*, which means "body" both in the literal sense of physical body and in the figurative sense of "body of works"; *vilia* means "vile," a sarcastic cut at the substandard level of the "body of works" produced, as Nietzsche sees it, by modern human beings.

120, 5 *occurs... not]* *Sd*: occurs to me: Why Democritus? Why not

120, 16–17 *Eternal Feminine... upward]* An allusion to the closing lines of Goethe's *Faust*; see *Faust*, pt. II, ll. 12110–11: "Das Ewig-Weibliche/Zieht uns hinan" (The Eternal Feminine/Draws us upward).

121, 6 *survey and supervise]* Nietzsche's verb, *überschauen*, connotes both "to survey" and "to supervise," and both meanings seem applicable here.

121, 13 *few]* *Sd*: few or no

121, 24–25 *have... them.]* *Sd*: draw from the inkwell of the Danaides.

121, 25 *guiding their pens]* Nietzsche's phrase, *ihre Federn führen*, plays on the expression *federführend*, meaning "competent," or "leading," as in the leading figure of a movement or organization.

121, 25 *guiding... guided]* *Pp:* writing with their pens are written

121, 27 *impotentia]* "impotence."

6

121, 29 *6]* Cf. 29 [96, 62, 92].

121, 30–122, 13 *But... unjust.]* *Deleted opening in Pd*: At the same time, the modern human being, insofar as he is the historically cultivated human being, even deceives himself into believing that he is the *just human being* and that his famed objectivity is the font of the highest virtue, of justice!

122, 14–124, 9 *Truly... truth.]* *Title in Pd*: *All Sorts of Servants of Truth.* Cf. 29 [23].

123, 10 *fear of]* *Sd*: flight from

125, 17 *in conformity with]* *Sd*; *Pm*: in a manner that does justice to

125, 35–36 *contemplates... connotes]* *Sd*: contemplates and thereby forgets his own person. In other words, one demands of the historian artistic contemplativeness and

126, 2 *empirical]* *Sd*; *Pm*: true

127, 2 *events."]* Nietzsche has pieced together this quotation from

two different statements by Franz Grillparzer; see Grillparzer's *Sämmtliche Werke* (Stuttgart, 1872), 9: 129, 40.

127, 11 *imagination."]* See Friedrich Schiller, *Was heisst und zu welchem Ende studiert man Universalgeschichte?* (What is and why do we study universal history?).

127, 12 *a celebrated historical virtuoso]* Nietzsche is referring to the German historian Leopold von Ranke. The source of the quotation Nietzsche goes on to cite is unknown.

127, 17–18 *truth... untruth]* *Sd*: wisdom... unwisdom

127, 19 *compelled"]* See Goethe's letter to Schiller dated 21 Feb. 1798.

127, 22 *itself."]* The source of the quotation attributed to Swift is unknown.

128, 24 *boringness]* *Pm*: boredom

128, 27 *that artistic condition]* *Sd*: artistic disinterestedness

129, 11–14 *On... that.]* *Pd*: Not every age is charged with the task of being the judge of all previous ages, and our age certainly least of all, because it relates to the great ages the same way as the critic relates to the work of art.

129, 26 *Otherwise]* *Sd*: Otherwise you are lost, otherwise

129, 35–36 *artistic]* *Sd*: artificial

130, 8 *"historiens de M. Thiers."]* "The historians who work for M. Thiers." Louis Adolphe Thiers was a French historian known for his work on monumental historical projects.

130, 11 *easier to combine]* *Sd*: often found together

130, 12 *history]* *Sd*; *Pm*: history requires the active human being, history

130, 23–28 *By... striving.]* *Pd*: Let me tell you how one controls the historical sensibility: Eyes front! Set a great goal! Take [German] Prussian politics as your model!

7

131, 12 *7]* Cf. 29 [56, 51].

131, 19–20 *its verdict is always a death sentence.]* Nietzsche's text reads literally: "its verdict is always an annihilation" (*sein Richten ist immer ein Vernichten*), whereby the identity of this verdict and annihilation is underscored by the rhyme on *Richten* and *Ver-*

nichten. The chosen translation attempts to render the rhetorical force of the German original, without being able to recreate this rhyme.

131, 20–28 *If...goal.]* *Pd*: The historical sensibility, when a constructive impulse stands behind it, has its highest worth as an element that sweeps away and destroys, for wherever something is comprehended, the creative instinct is annihilated. A religion that seeks to become a science seeks to destroy itself.

132, 13 *tyrants."]* See Goethe's essay "Fragment über die Natur" (Fragment on nature). Nietzsche apparently lifts the quotation from Eduard von Hartmann's *Die Philosophie des Unbewussten* (The philosophy of the unconscious) (Berlin, 1869), 620, since Nietzsche retains the minor alterations present in Hartmann's quotation of the passage.

132, 19 *Voltaire's écrasez]* Voltaire's famous motto, *écrasez l'infame*, "destroy the infamous thing," meaning: destroy the church.

132, 22 *Protestant Union]* Founded in 1863, the German Protestant Union, which emerged from the movement known as "Cultural Protestantism," sought to reform and modernize the Lutheran Church.

132, 33 *theologus liberalis vulgaris]* "common liberal theologian."

133, 1–2 *"greatest theologian of the century"]* The German theologian and philosopher Friedrich Daniel Schleiermacher.

133, 31 *lust for the new]* Nietzsche's word, *Neubegier*, is a neologism that combines the common word *Neugier*, "curiosity," with *Begierde*, "lust."

133, 32 *actio in distans]* "distanced action."

134, 4 *illusion,"]* See Wagner, *Die Meistersinger*, act 3, scene 1.

135, 8 *clumps"]* A line from Schiller's poem "Der Taucher" (The diver).

135, 11–14 *The young...are.]* *Pm*: The young person has become an outcast, is skeptical about all customs and concepts; now he knows: in every age things were different; it does not matter what you are.

135, 21 *ones."]* See Hölderlin's letter to Isaak von Sinclair dated 24 Dec. 1798.

136, 1–12 *Believe...scholars.]* *Pd*: It ought no longer be the era of

the harmonious personality, but rather that of "common labor." But that only means: *before* they are complete, human beings are used in the factory. But have no doubt, in a short time scholarship will be just as ruined as the human beings who accomplish this factory labor.

136, 20–23 *The carters...genius.]* *Pm*: The carters have negotiated a labor contract among themselves, according to which genius is supposed to be declared superfluous by reminting every carter as a genius.

137, 6 *Goethe]* See Goethe's *Maximen und Reflexionen* (Maxims and reflections), nos. 694 and 693. Cf. 29 [84].

137, 21 *conceive...enough.]* *Sd*: comprehend it as noble and lofty enough. But it is not easy to conceive your "mixed public" in all its vulgarity.

137, 23–24 *aqua fortis]* nitric acid.

8

137, 33 *8]* Cf. 29 [46].

138, 8 *error,"]* The source of this quotation from Goethe is unknown.

138, 24–139, 4 *Historical...end!]* Cf. 29 [48].

139, 14 *memento mori]* "remember that you must die."

139, 16 *knowledge and conscience]* Nietzsche is playing on the close etymological connection in German of *Wissen* (knowledge) and *Gewissen* (conscience). One could approximate this by rendering the passage as "science and con-science," but although such a rendering recreates the rhetorical effect of Nietzsche's German, it strays somewhat too far from the literal meaning of the passage.

139, 17 *memento vivere]* "remember that you are alive"; Nietzsche is probably alluding to Goethe's "Gedenke zu leben!" (Remember to live!) from *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* (Wilhelm Meister's apprenticeship), bk. VIII, chap. 5.

139, 19 *insincere...is]* *Pm*: insincere, just as if a lame person were to swing his leg while sitting in order to demonstrate how fast he could run. In the same way, humanity sits

140, 4 *striving]* *Sd*: living

140, 25 *history... theology]* An allusion to Ludwig Feuerbach's famous statement that philosophy is a disguised theology.

141, 2–4 *explanation... explanations] Sd*; *Pm*: possibility... possibilities

141, 24 *life."]* This quotation is taken from Wilhelm Wackernagel's *Abhandlungen zur deutschen Literaturgeschichte* (Essays on German literary history), from vol. 2 of his *Kleinere Schriften*, ed. Moritz Heyne (Leipzig, 1873). This book was part of Nietzsche's personal library.

143, 13 *concept,"] Pm*: concept," with demonstrable necessity

143, 15 *scornfully] Pm*: justifiably

143, 21–32 *so that... facts."]* Cf. 29 [51].

143, 24 *everything] Sd*: everything[, for example, the present constellation of glory and victory wreaths,]

143, 31 *mythological] Sd*: unmythological

144, 23 *ira... studium... sine ira et studio]* The words *ira* and *studium* mean, respectively, "anger" and "course of study." Nietzsche ironically plays these literal meanings off against the phrase *sine ira et studio*, "without anger and self-involvement," which the Roman historian Tacitus used to describe the manner in which he wrote his histories. Nietzsche thus takes another sarcastic swipe at the emotionally detached "objectivity" and pedantic studiousness of modern historians.

145, 5 *more like a calf than a god]* An allusion to the pagan sacrifice of calves, which is intended to underscore the "idolatrous" character of those who worship history.

145, 7 *natura naturans]* "creative nature." This term was employed by the philosopher Baruch de Spinoza to designate God as a creative force, as the origin of all things. It is often opposed to *natura naturata*, "created" or "man-made nature."

145, 34 *me!"]* The protagonist of Goethe's novel *Die Leiden des jungen Werther* (The sorrows of young Werther) commits suicide, an act that set off a rash of actual suicides by readers of the book who identified with its protagonist. This caused Goethe to issue a warning in the second edition of the novel, admonishing his readers not to follow Werther's example.

146, 3 *be."] Pd*: be." In this respect history is a self-contradictory,

self-consuming, self-negating absurdity, and every moment that only becomes a moment by killing the previous one teaches us this lesson.

9

146, 8 *9]* Cf. 29 [72, 59, 51, 40].

146, 25 *become]* *Pp*: again become

146, 32 *process."]* The quotation is drawn from Eduard von Hartmann's *Philosophie des Unbewussten* (Philosophy of the unconscious) (Berlin, 1869), 638. Further references will be cited as "Hartmann" with the page number. Hartmann was a popular metaphysical philosopher, and his *Philosophie des Unbewussten* went through a number of editions in the years immediately following its first publication in 1869.

147, 23 *Overproud]* *Sd*; *Pp*: Jocular

148, 9 *Hegel]* Cf. 29 [72].

148, 10 *hand."]* From Hegel's "Introduction" to his *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte* (Lectures on the philosophy of history).

148, 34–149, 33 *If ... redemption."]* Cf. 29 [59, 66, 51].

149, 6 *ex causis efficientibus]* "by means of efficient causes."

149, 6–7 *ex causa finali]* "by means of a final cause."

149, 13 *manhood"]* Hartmann, 619, 625.

149, 14 *mediocrity,"]* Hartmann, 618.

149, 16 *stockbroker,"]* Hartmann, 619.

149, 23 *education."]* Hartmann, 619.

149, 29 *influence"]* Hartmann, 610.

149, 33 *redemption."]* Hartmann, 637–38.

150, 23 *world."]* Hartmann, 638.

150, 28 *process."]* Hartmann, 638.

150, 30 *suicide."]* Hartmann, 635–36.

150, 34 *it."]* Hartmann, 638.

151, 5 *infelicitous."]* Quoted by Nietzsche in the original English. The source is unknown, but the quotation could possibly be taken from Walter Bagehot's *Physics and Politics*, which was published in 1869.

151,17 *owl,"]* The source of this quotation attributed to Goethe is unknown.

151,29–33 *the republic...them.]* See Schopenhauer, *Der handschriftliche Nachlaß*, ed. A. Hübscher (Frankfurt, 1970), 3: 188. Cf. 24 [4].

152,11 *the Danaides' futile attempts to draw water]* According to Greek mythology, forty-nine of the fifty daughters of Danaus, a king of Argos, killed their husbands by order of their father and were condemned in Hades forever to attempt to draw water with sieves.

152,14 *Judgment."]* Hartmann, 637.

152,32–33 *time...appear"]* The force of Nietzsche's fictional decree depends on the etymological relation of the German word *Zeitungen* ("newspapers") with the noun *Zeit* ("time"). The implication is that the only way to halt the appearance of newspapers, which Nietzsche vilifies, is to halt time itself.

153,21 *a posteriori]* Literally, "from what comes later." In philosophical discourse this phrase designates the process of moving inductively from particular observations to general laws, or deriving generalizations from empirical givens.

153,25 *animae magnae prodigus]* Literally, "prodigal of a great soul," but meaning "careless of life." The phrase is taken from Horace's *Odes*, I.12.38.

154,5–155,29 *Only...God."]* Cf. 29 [40, 41, 139, 149].

155,1 *him.] Pd*: him: but here what is original seems to have gotten completely lost, and all that remains is a name for tendencies of the masses and of many ambitious-egoistic individuals.

155,4–5 *imperium romanum]* "Roman empire."

155,16–18 *Expressed...progress;]* Cf. 29 [49].

156,10–29 *In sum...everything.]* Cf. 29 [51].

156,13 *future."]* Hartmann, 618.

156,14 *humanity,"]* Hartmann, 625.

156,22 *striving."]* Hartmann, 625.

156,29 *everything.]* Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, act 2, scene 7, ll. 162–65.

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158, 21–23 *in the immaturity . . . skepticism,]* Cf. 27 [80].

159, 10–12 *For . . . of time,]* *Pd*: But it is obvious that they will perish. Cf. 29 [142].

159, 14 *gradual."]* Hartmann, 638.

159, 22–23 *Gottsched's . . . Pindar]* Johann Christian Gottsched's dramatic theories, which were adapted from French models, dominated the eighteenth-century German stage until Gottsched was attacked and his theories debunked by such critical spirits as Lessing. Karl Wilhelm Ramler, today viewed as a minor poet, at best, in his own time earned the appellation "the German Pindar" based on his odes. Both men represent figures who won renown in their own time but who had already been recognized as negligible a hundred years later when Nietzsche was writing this essay.

160, 5–6 *the quickly dated up-to-date babbler]* Nietzsche is playing on the term *altklug*, which means "precocious," but whose literal significance is something like "having the cunning of old age at an early age." In playful reference to this term he then coins the word *neuweis*, "newly wise." The rendering "quickly dated up-to-date" attempts to capture both the temporal contrast so central to this juxtaposition as well as the rhetorical power of Nietzsche's language.

160, 6 *sensorium]* The supposed seat of physical sensation in the gray matter of the brain.

160, 8–9 *thirst. That]* *Pd*: thirst—in short, the pseudoimage of the vital and healthy cultured human being, who is above all human being, inwardly and outwardly whole and one of a kind. That

161, 18 *babblers!—]* *Followed in Up with this passage that Nietzsche then deleted*: What made governing so difficult for Germany's leading statesman for an entire decade if not the acquired, indeed, stolen conceptions of foreign party politics that were buzzing around in the heads of the Germans, conceptions that correspond to no views in Germany itself, those needs composed of words and schematisms, not needs composed of vital exigencies? What is the true cause of that disgraceful conflict, mocked

abroad, in which we Germans live with the creative artistic genius of the age, in whose name precisely this age will be engraved upon and honored by the memory of posterity? What else but acquired, empty words and historical, gray-stranded conceptual spiderwebs in which the German has trapped his full and profound nature, and in which, once caught, he then sucks the blood out of his own living reality. For this is precisely what "cultivation" wants: to sit in a conceptual web, to sit bloodlessly and be vicious to all those who blow on this web and now and again blow away some of its filaments.

161, 19 *Plato]* Plato expounds this theory of the necessary lie in *The Republic*, 3.414b.

161, 31 *aeterna veritas]* "eternal truth."

162, 6–18 *But...age.]* *Disposition in Pd*: Self-correctional facility necessary for the first generation. Cure, being able to forget. (Impossible without somewhat too much; we will certainly suffer from the cures.)

162, 11–13 *Thus...upbringing.]* Cf. 29 [182].

162, 30 *cogito, ergo sum...vivo, ergo cogito]* A reference to Descartes's famous formula "I think, therefore I am," which Nietzsche modifies to read "I live, therefore I think."

162, 33 *animal...cogital]* Nietzsche takes the word *animal* in its broadest meaning as something that is "animated," i.e., that lives, and he coins the word *cogital*, meaning something that cogitates or thinks, in analogy to it.

163, 24–29 *With...religion.]* Cf. 29 [194].

163, 29–164, 5 *Science...becoming.]* *Pd*: Science views both as poisons, but it is really only a lack of science that lets them be conceived as poisons and not as remedies. A branch of science is lacking: a kind of higher hygiene that examines the effects of science on life and determines the permitted amount from the standpoint of the health of a people or of a culture. Prescription: The ahistorical teaches forgetting, localizes, creates atmosphere, horizon; the suprahistorical makes more indifferent to the allurements of history, has a soothing and diverting effect. Nature philosophy art pity.

165, 1–4 *But...hybrids.]* Cf. 29 [195].

166, 16 *God of Delphi]* Apollo, who as the god of prophecy ruled over the oracle of Delphi.

166, 19 *alludes."]* Heraclitus, fragment 93 (Diels-Kranz).

166, 33–167, 7 *The Greeks...peoples.]* Cf. 29 [191, 192].

167, 19 *physis]* "nature."

167, 25–28 *even...culture.]* *Pm*: may this truthfulness also often undermine and bring about the downfall of a "cultivatedness" that stands in high esteem, a merely decorative culture.

167, 28 *culture.]* *Followed in Pm by this passage, which Nietzsche then deleted*: "And what is to become of us?," the historians will reluctantly object at the end of my observations. What is to become of the science of history, our famous, rigorous, sober, methodical science? "Get thee to a nunnery, Ophelia," Hamlet says {see Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, act 3, scene 1, l. 121}; but to which nunnery do we wish to ban this science and the historical scholar? This is a riddle that the reader must himself address and solve if he is too impatient to wait for the author's own solution in a herewith promised set of observations "On the Scholar and His Thoughtless Integration into Modern Society." {Nietzsche never completed the promised essay.} Cf. 29 [196].